# Commentary

VOLUME EIGHTY-SEVEN • NUMBER FOUR • APRIL 1989

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Alain Besançon

## Behind "Who Is a Jew"
Edward Norden

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## Why My Grandfather Leon Trotsky Must Be Turning in His Grave
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## Apocalypse Again
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## A New Look at Prokofiev
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## The Brodkey Question
Carol Iannone

## Books in Review
Joshua Muravchik/Edward Alexander/David Frum/Robert Alter

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# Letters from Readers

## Genesis 1

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . In his article, "Evolution and the Bible: Genesis 1 Revisited" [November 1988], Leon R. Kass summarily rejects the enterprise called "creation science." Nonetheless, he confesses to a grudging defense of the creation scientists and their fundamentalist followers. He views them as "properly dissatisfied" with a theory of evolution that refuses to confront ultimate sources and origins, that dismisses the search for causal explanation as obscurantist metaphysics. . . .

In his concluding paragraphs, Mr. Kass returns to the question of first cause. Even if creation is evolution and proceeds by natural processes, "what is *responsible* for this natural process?" he asks. "Can a dumb process," he eloquently laments, "ruled by strict necessity and chance mutation, having no rhyme or reason, ultimately answer sufficiently for life, for man, for the whole?"

The rules of the game of science preclude such questions because the "natural processes" determine the limits of scientific inquiry. But Mr. Kass insists, and well he may, on uttering the existentialist cry for help to which evolutionists, in principle, cannot respond. It is a cry of Kierkegaardian dread. In his concluding sentence, Mr. Kass suggests that the dilemma is dissolved in a leap of faith. . . .

LEO BLOND
Bayside, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Regarding Leon R. Kass's closing remarks: yes, we evolutionists *can* confidently reject the first claim of the Bible—that *God* created the heavens and the earth. No empirical evidence exists for God, and the concept is totally unnecesary to explain the substance and order of our universe. Other universes may be different, but ours is an evolutionary universe in which most fundamental forces are conducive to increasing complexity, the essence of evolution. . . .

Cosmological theories like the big bang . . . enable us, at last, to explain the origin of the universe without invoking a putative "supreme being." . . .

TIM DONOVAN, JR.
Manchester, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Seeking to harmonize the Bible with the teachings of science, Leon R. Kass suggests we can find in Genesis 1 a *process* at work of gradual differentiation and separation, far more compatible with the teachings of evolution than the standard fundamentalist view of repeated acts of creation *ex nihilo*. He neglects to mention that the resolution he proposes is not original. It is in fact *the* classical Jewish reading of the text.

The view that creation "evolved" through gradual individuation from a sea of potential life is put forth both by Rashi, the 11th-century commentator, and printed as a companion to all standard Hebrew editions of the Bible, and by Maimonides as well. Rashi makes the point four times, most clearly in his gloss on 1:24. "Let the earth bring forth living animals," says the text. Rashi comments: "All were created on the first day and there remained only *to draw them out*" (emphasis added).

Maimonides follows this approach as well. In *Guide for the Perplexed*, he comments on the nuances in meaning of the various words translated as "create." *Bara'* means to create *ex nihilo*. *'Asah* and *yatsar* mean to shape or mold from what previously exists. Maimonides explains Genesis 1:

> [E]verything was created simultaneously; then gradually all things became differentiated. They have compared this to what happens when an agricultural laborer sows various kinds of grain in the soil at the same moment. Some of them sprout within a day, others within two days, others again within three days, though everything was sowed at the same hour. [*Guide for the Perplexed II, 30*]

. . . Rashi and Maimonides made their comments not as apologetics in the face of scientific challenge, but because that is how they read the text. . . .

[RABBI] NACHUM BRAVERMAN
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The article by Leon R. Kass is certainly a seminal one, . . . but one small emendation is in order. Mr. Kass points out that according to Genesis the sun was not created until the fourth day and asks if this



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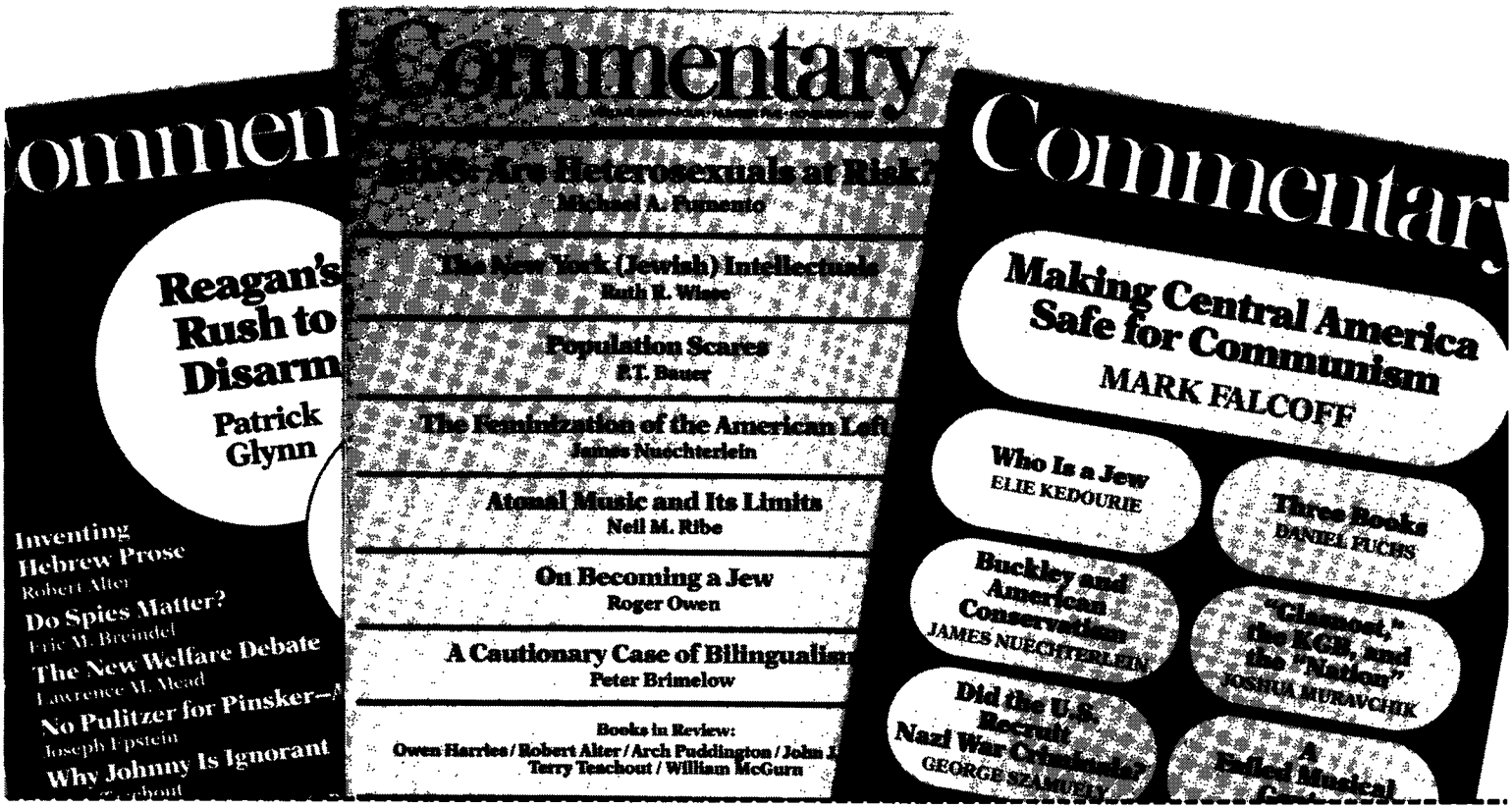


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. . . is not meant to impart some particle of wisdom, to correct "some aspects of our naive, untutored perception of our world." He then . . . invokes a concept he calls "hierarchy" to account for this apparently irrational sequence. It seems to me, however, that Mr. Kass's own reasoning points to a different explanation.

On the principle that the simplest explanation is most likely to be true, it would seem that the goal of the "author of Genesis" was simply to discredit . . . the idea that the sun—so essential in the food chain, hence vital to man—was the one God or even . . . His representative. Hence the sun is portrayed . . . as not even important enough to be the first thing created. . . . It is relegated to the same degree of religious authority as the moon, i.e., none at all, as both were not created until Day Four.

No great feat of imagination is required to conceive of what place in modern iconology the sun might have usurped had it been the first thing created. . . . It would have achieved the status of the physical proxy, if not the actual body, of the invisible God delineated in the Bible.

ROBERT GREENGARD
Holon, Israel

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

While Leon R. Kass briefly refers to biologists who hold that God could create through the evolutionary process, he does not emphasize the importance of this point. Man has been creating new species through such means for a long time now; do fundamentalists or evolutionists deny God's ability to do the same?

Mr. Kass slights the implications of the big-bang theory even more. One should perhaps consider that science has not yet concluded whether it was *creatio ex nihilo* or from some original material. Prime candidate for the latter is matter at its highest level of entropy, totally dispersed, without form or movement, without energy differential, *chaos*.

What if one were to attempt to explain the scientific concepts of the creation to primitive people; would one not end up with a story very much like Genesis 1? Maimonides already knew that the Torah speaks in the language of man. Simple analogies would have to be used, and are. Some discrepancies are, indeed, jarring; and that is where explanations such as those of Mr. Kass regarding the necessary "demotion" of the sun are most valuable. . . .

Finally, it is worth considering that the real object of the creation may have not been *Homo sapiens* but *Homo sapiens sapiens*, or the conscious human. Increasingly, scientists consider the possibility that consciousness developed much later than primitive civilizations, much later than language; indeed, it may be only a few thousand years old. . . . It is, then, not unreasonable to suggest that consciousness took hold in the conventional mode of natural selection, over a few millennia. . . . Rereading Genesis 3 in that light may also be instructive.

ANDREW SANDERS
Toronto, Canada

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Leon R. Kass is introduced to us by COMMENTARY as a biochemist and by himself ("we evolutionists") as an evolutionist. I know of no evidence that he is qualified in either of these two fields.

It is customary to treat Genesis 1 with reverence, because of its religious standing. Were it not for this, its relation to evolution would be . . . analogous to a comparison between the signs of the zodiac and modern astrophysics. Astronomers do not have to argue with astrologers; in this they are more fortunate than biologists who are continually pestered by fundamentalists.

With a wave of the hand, Mr. Kass dismisses "creation science." This is to his credit. He decries "the quality of reasoning in the few publications I have seen." Surely he should read more; copious lists will reach him from the Institute for Creation Research on request, including titles such as "Evolution, the Fossils Say No," "The Twilight of Evolution," "The Genesis Flood," "Have You Been Brainwashed?," "Dinosaurs, Those Terrible Lizards," and "Dry Bones." Why does Mr. Kass not use a little of the ample space in his article to tell readers of the travesties that are foisted on schools as "science textbooks" as a result of creationist pressures, and of the harassment of schoolteachers who teach evolution?

Modern evolution has no connection with Genesis 1. It has gone molecular, and gone into computers. It is DNA, RNA, and protein sequences. Its basis was stated by geneticist Theodosius Dobzhansky: "Nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution." It has its own peer-reviewed journals—*Journal of Molecular Evolution, Molecular Biology and Evolution, Journal of Human Evolution, Origins of Life*, and others—and it spills over into all major biological journals: *Nature, Science, Journal of Biological Chemistry, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (USA), Genetics, Heredity*, and on and on. A typical title: "Structural and evolutionary implications of the packaging of DNA for differentiation and proliferation in the lymphocyte." In short, a world far from the horizon of COMMENTARY.

It is not surprising that an ancient and monotheistic people should reason that God was the first cause. I have never heard an evolutionist challenge this. Many agree with Father Theodore Hesburgh that there is no way to place limits on the powers of the Creator. Such matters are outside the realm of science.

But Mr. Kass fails to note that in Genesis 1 (which he quotes), the appearance of grass, herbs, and trees preceded the making of the sun. He says, "God asks the earth to 'grass grass,' but the earth instead *put forth* grass" (emphasis in original). But Genesis 1:11-12 says, "And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass" (who edited Mr. Kass's manuscript?). . . . "And the earth brought forth grass." Where is the "disobedience" alleged by Mr. Kass? Why does Mr. Kass conveniently omit mention of Genesis 2:21-22, the making of woman from one of Adam's ribs? Mr. Kass alludes briefly to Noah's Ark in terms that imply his literal belief in this charming myth: a myth that is filled with facts and figures that make it quite impossible. Given the dimensions of the Ark and its wooden construction, the first stiff breeze would have broken it up. Its capacity was only a fraction of what was needed for the animals and their food supply, not to speak of their specialized requirements for housing. . . .

Mr. Kass asks, "Did God not make frogs and alligators? Could they be later 'creatures' evolving out of an exclusively watery niche?" Please, Mr. Kass! Where do you think *you* came from? Please go read any zoology textbook, Chapter 1: Evolution and Classifi-

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cation of Vertebrates. Fishes, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, Kass.

THOMAS H. JUKES
*Journal of Molecular Evolution*
University of California
Berkeley, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Thank you for the article, "Evolution and the Bible," by Leon R. Kass. It was wonderful food for thought.

I do not think, however, that Genesis 1:14-17 states that the sun, the moon, and the stars were *created* on the fourth "day." Genesis does not tell us when earth or sun came to be, except that it was "in [the] beginning." Genesis has no dates.

Genesis 1:16 says, "*Va-ya'as elohim et shenei ha-me'orot,*" and God *made* the source of these luminaries, sun and moon, visible on earth, no doubt by a change in earth's atmosphere. Created (*bara'*) in Genesis 1 is *not* synonymous with *'asah,* to make. If it were, Genesis 2:3, where both are used, would be pleonastic. . . .

Rashi (1040-1105 C.E.) supposed that Genesis 1:17 meant only that sun and moon were "suspended" in the expanse on the fourth day after having been created earlier. On this "day," sun and moon assumed the function in relation to the earth that they have now, after a change in the primeval atmosphere that prevented them from doing so previously.

*'Asah* (to "make" or "do") is rendered *74 different ways* in the Authorized (King James) Version of the Bible—"work," "appoint," "fashion," "accomplish," "finish," "make ready," "prepare," etc., etc. *Bara',* on the other hand, used only of God, only means "create." The terms are not synonymous in Genesis.

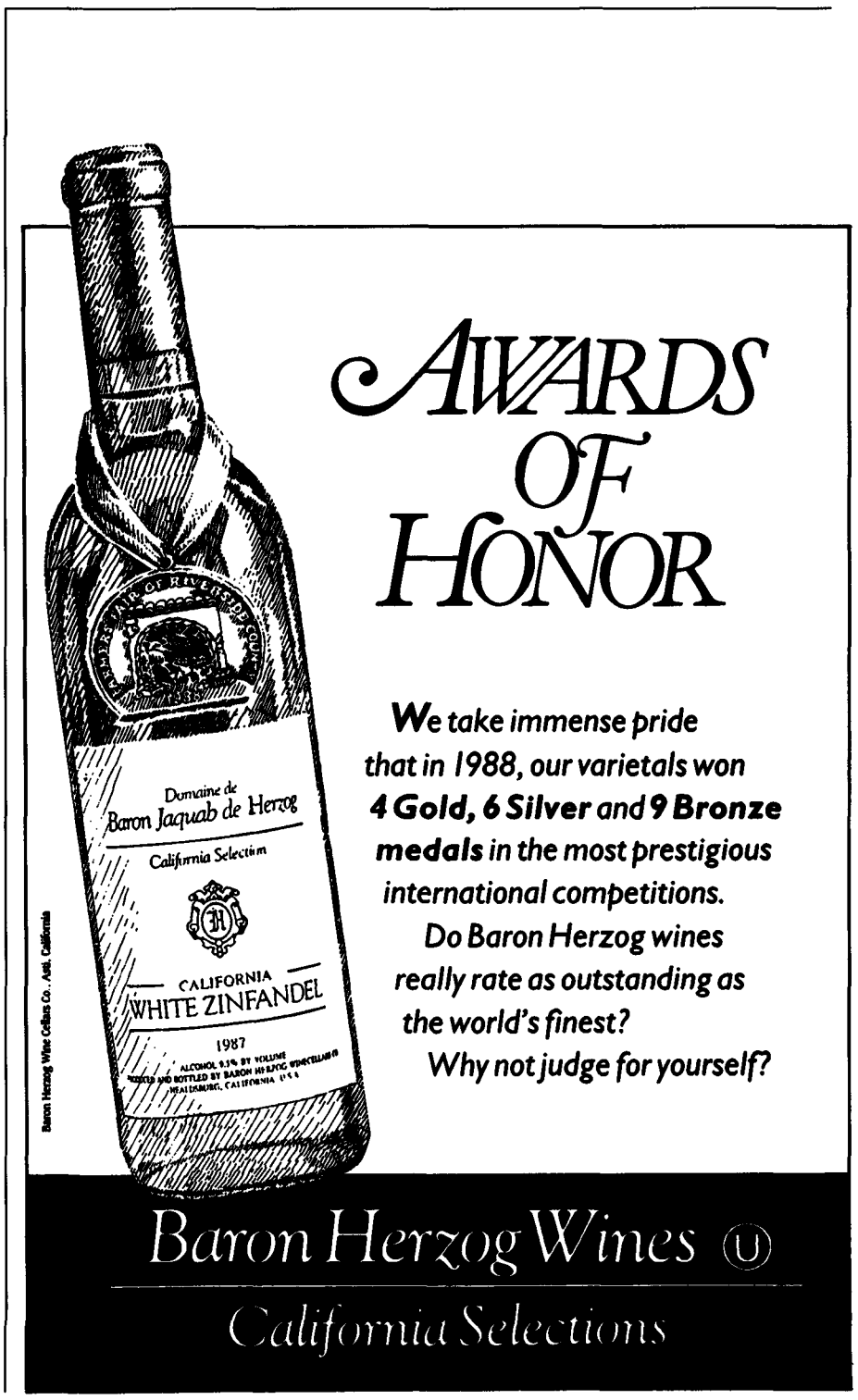
Incidentally, *bore',* creator, is *bari* in Arabic, where it also means "evolver." . . . Because God is *bore'* and *'oseh,* he both creates *and* makes. Perhaps the "makes" leaves room for what scientists call "evolution."

SOLOMON M. LANDERS
Clinton, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . It is obvious that Leon R. Kass is certain of God's reality, and it is clear that this faith sustains him. But doesn't an *a priori* belief in God affect the entire course of a line of reasoning which deals with the role God has played in our creation? What about those of us who think the arguments for the existence of God are tenuous at best? Or those of us who hold a non-theistic faith (such as Buddhism)? Or those of us who are simply unsure? Might we not interpret the Book of Genesis in a different light? I would simply ask Mr. Kass (respectfully) if he has arrived at an answer before he has asked the question.

I would ask further why he believes that it is science's job to consider "the ultimate sources and origins of things" if by "ultimate sources" he means the role of a divine creator in bringing all things into existence. How can we ask science to tackle such a question and still expect it to be scientific? If the basis of science is empiricism, and if the doctrine of divine origins rests solely on bib-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lical assertion, in what manner can science hope to proceed? What evidence can it gather? What experiments can it conduct? How can the subject of God's existence, nature, and function be put to any scientific test, presumably one that can be replicated? . . .

I suppose what bothers me the most about Mr. Kass's article (however deeply felt and argued) is that it seems to be saying that if we cannot figure out what came before the big bang (if indeed the word "before" has any relevance in a timeless situation), if we have not yet figured out how the chemical evolution behind DNA got started, and if we do not yet understand the nature of consciousness, we should turn to Genesis and be assured that all is as it should be and that we are the crown of creation. We are being asked to accept the proposition that since the writers of Genesis wrote certain statements that can be interpreted as consistent with the findings of modern science, this therefore proves the divine origin of the world and its living beings.

But it appears to me that this conclusion can be arrived at only by stretching the evidence out of all recognition. For example, how can inanimate matter exhibit the quality of recalcitrance? Recalcitrance is a volitional act. And what of the analogy of creation with fruit trees making fruit? Surely we could take any object in the natural world and use it to demonstrate the "truth" of any particular proposition. (Mr. Kass himself recognizes the limitations of this example.) It appears to me that all the comparisons made between Genesis and natural science's findings are overly broad, superficial, and coincidental in nature.

I am unwilling to embrace the misleading certainties of the Bible simply because we have not yet answered all of the questions we have concerning the ultimate origins of our world. If Stephen Hawking succeeds in mathematically eliminating the need for a first cause; if A.G. Cairns-Smith succeeds in demonstrating the mineral origins of life on our planet; and if indeed the evidence of evolution through natural selection is shown to prove the universe does not have a conscious design (the contention of Richard Dawkins), where does that leave Mr. Kass's analysis of Genesis? . . .

JOSEPH A. MILLER
Frankfort, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . There is one very important reason why we should not take Genesis 1 as literal history—namely, the second chapter. In the first chapter the order of creation is plant life, animal life, then humanity. In the second chapter . . . the order of creation is first man, then plant life, animal life, and finally woman. It is obvious that the details of these two creation stories do not match—and so we must conclude that the ancient Israelites did not expect us to interpret these stories literally, or they would have altered the details so that the two stories would have matched each other. As a Catholic, I believe in a literal creation and a literal fall, but I also have to conclude that Genesis was never intended to be a science textbook. At the same time I have to say that I do not think science textbooks are infallible, and that . . . many scientific theories are based on presumption as much as on observation. . . .

DON SCHENK
Allentown, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I would like to add two observations to Leon R. Kass's lucid and astute corrective to the longstanding tendency—apparently as resilient as it is misguided—to view as irreconcilable the creation account in Genesis and the doctrine . . . of evolution.

First, . . . the *lawful character* of the cosmos is no less a function of divine decree than is its *existence*. . . . Thus, "natural processes" and their outcomes are no less attributable to divine decree than would be the most staggering of miracles.

Second, Mr. Kass seems troubled by the idea of creation "out of God's own substance," which he believes to be in contradistinction to the text's insistence on the bifurcation between God and the world. However, to the great relief of religious Jews with irrepressible "pantheistic" inclinations (such as myself), a number of kabbalists—and, accordingly, a number of hasidic sects—maintain that the divine substance is the *only* substance (or something very close to it), i.e., is all that there *really* is. This, needless to say, entails that the cosmos *is* created "out of God's own substance." Moreover, this in no way constitutes a serious vitiation of the distinction between God and the world, i.e., an unacceptable metaphysical assimilation of the world to God. . . .

ROBERT OAKES
Chesterfield, Missouri

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

One characteristic of Genesis 1 that Leon R. Kass does not emphasize sufficiently and another that he overlooks entirely would add strength to two of his arguments. (1) Genesis 1 points to the ontological order of creation and is not a report of simple temporal sequences; and (2) Genesis 1 shows human beings to be open-ended historical and moral creatures who cannot be accounted for by a biologically reductionist science.

The characteristic of Genesis 1 that should be emphasized to strengthen Mr. Kass's argument is the full six-day hierarchy of creatures. Mr. Kass focuses his attention almost entirely on the two parallel groups of three days. Perhaps this aspect of the text seems too obvious to require further emphasis. But the meaning of the creation story's "divisions" and "distinctions" fit together in a pattern where the later creatures rule over, or (in the case of humans) have stewardship responsibilities for, the creatures of earlier days. Whatever the degree of continuity in the "comings-into-being" of the different creatures (as far as evolutionary biological theory might stress), the fact remains that Genesis 1 stresses not simply the distinction among different kinds, but a hierarchy of order, as Mr. Kass points out, such that human creatures are stewards over all, under God.

According to Genesis 1, each of the six days has its own "place" in the full hierarchy. The realities that each day "brings forth" are creatures that exist simultaneously with every other creature and not simply in temporal sequence before or after them. If biological evolutionists err in stressing potential biological continuity to the point of ignoring the peculiar meaning and character of all the different creatures, then the "creation-science" people err in a kind of temporal reductionism which hangs too much on the "time" of the creation days. Genesis 1 is a simple but beautifully complex and harmonious ontology of creation that achieves all that Mr. Kass says it does. But the full six-day hierarchy of order and subordination should not be lost from sight.

The second aspect of the story

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that Mr. Kass overlooks entirely is that the creation is a *seven-day* order, not a six-day order. It is true that to make this judgment one must follow the story into the first part of Genesis 2, but there is important textual evidence which suggests that the second creation story (to which Mr. Kass refers) begins with Genesis 2:4 and not with 2:1. There is no way to make sense out of the entire covenantal order of Israel's life under God without seeing that it is based on a seven-day pattern that is rooted in the seven-day order of creation. (See Exodus 20:8-11 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15.)

How does this strengthen Mr. Kass's argument? His argument about human creatures is that their moral purpose in the creation is not evident simply from the order of the creatures themselves. Human nature is not yet "good" in the sense of "complete, fully formed," "determinate, finished." Human beings, in fact, were created for a task—called to a responsibility for the creation under God that requires the ongoing hearing of God's voice and giving heed to the One who created them with a destiny.

The seven-day order of creation sheds further light on the meaning of this reality. God's seventh day of *shalom* is not His sitting back in tiredness, but rather His glorying in a completion and fulfillment that is tied, in part, to the completion of the human task. The seventh day is the end or goal of all creation; it is the destiny of human fulfillment following the completion of the work (and moral calling) given by God to man and woman in their generations. . . .

Thus, the open-ended historical character of human nature has its meaning, according to Genesis 1, not first of all as a potential for further biological evolution within the sixth day but as a potential for communion in society and with God toward the ultimate "rest" toward which God has called His image. Even if one grants the possibility of species change, as Mr. Kass does, he is correct that this does not answer the most important questions about the identity and meaning of different creatures, especially of human beings. With regard to action, society, and politics, as he says, "the cosmos can have nothing at all to say or teach about all the important questions of human beings *living with other human beings*" (emphasis in original).

Insofar as Genesis 1 helps people to recognize that human creatures are more than biotic entities, one ought to take note of the full scope of that story (through Genesis 2:3) and emphasize that the creation is a seven-day and not a six-day ontology.

JAMES W. SKILLEN
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "Evolution and the Bible", Leon R. Kass shows that the Bible intends not history but axiology in its first chapters. . . . In this respect, the rabbis are in wholehearted agreement with Mr. Kass. They do not look to Genesis for the mechanics of creation—mechanics falls outside the whole function of revelation.

There are 290 comments on the first verse of Genesis scattered throughout talmudic and pseudo-talmudic literature. A random survey of one hundred of these is, I think, a statistically sufficient basis to say that the rabbis did not read Genesis as a cosmogonic account. In fact, not a single one of the hundred texts I have examined is frankly cosmogonic.

We can extend this further. The Bible nowhere exhibits any intention to tell us things scientific (it satirizes the cause-and-effect claims for the rites of witches or of pagan priests). And it certainly does not present itself as a substitute for this pseudo-science—or proto-science if you like—of the ancient world. The Bible's rites are never mechanisms by which to manipulate God.

The extent to which Judaism sees itself as purely prescriptive is made immediately clear by Rabbi Yitzhak of the 2nd century, who found our fascinating Torah cosmogony totally irrelevant. "The Torah should have begun with the first of the [613] commandments," Rabbi Yitzhak wrote. "Why then did it begin with this [the story of creation]? . . ."

A thousand years later Rashi found this remark of Rabbi Yitzhak so fitting that he selected it from those 290 talmudic comments to introduce his own extensive commentary on the Holy Scriptures. Rabbi Yitzhak's comment reflects an attitude in the Bible itself and in its rabbinic mirror—that all of the Bible, precept and narrative alike, has one primary function: "to purify the creatures."


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Rabbi Avraham Karelitz, known as the Hazon Ish and considered the leading talmudist of our century, exemplified this classic view. He once reproached a student who had left the yeshiva to pursue studies in the university. "But," demurred the student, "I thirst for science and philosophy and literature. For the arts and history. There is more to truth than just Torah." "I will agree with you," replied the Hazon Ish, "when you will find me one person who has become a better human being through his study of those subjects."

Mr. Kass finds himself, at the end of the article, pushed toward a conclusion from which he retreats. He writes: "I have perhaps gone too far. . . . Creation becomes a process of God's fructification, out of God's own substance."

Mr. Kass here confronts the pantheist dilemma which is intrinsic in monotheism itself. . . . It has led to various schisms in Judaism and Christianity. . . . But the dilemma has never been rationally resolved. How can God be all-inclusive if He is totally unlike the world? If the physical, the temporal, the spatial, cannot apply to Him? . . .

JOSHUA B. WACHTFOGEL
Institute of Science,
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LEON R. KASS writes:

It is, I know, not very original for authors to complain that they have been misread. But in matters theological, dyslexia easily becomes epidemic. Indeed, it is the notorious misreadings of Genesis 1—by both its friends and its enemies—that prompted my article in the first place. I was not writing to vindicate Judaism or to refute science, to voice a "Kierkegaardian dread" (I have none) or to support an "*a priori* belief in God's reality," to advance a new and original reading (I acknowledged my great debt to Umberto Cassuto and Leo Strauss), or even to "harmonize the Bible with the teachings of science," but, quite simply, to try to understand the text of Genesis 1, by taking seriously all that it—and it alone—explicitly says: "First, to see what it actually says and means; second, to see what sort of text it is, and third, to see whether it is the sort of text and says the sort of things that can be disproved by science."

The great bulk of my essay was textual exegesis and interpretation, which enabled me to show that Genesis 1 is not incompatible with modern science, *not* because they both *teach* the *same things*, but rather because they do *not speak* about the same *subject*. I argued that the seemingly temporal account of Genesis 1 is in fact a means of conveying the immanent *hierarchic order* of our world and its intelligible principles. More important, this "ontological" account is driven by a *moral* intention, "to show, in small print, the incompleteness and ambiguity of the human, and, in bold print, the lack of divinity and moral irrelevance of the entire visible cosmos." True, I defended, as still tenable, some of Genesis's main teachings: the hierarchy of existing beings; the superior-but-metaphysically-ambiguous-and-morally-questionable-status of human beings; the non-divinity of the sun, moon, and all of nature; and the deep mystery of the ultimate beginnings—none of which we moderns need deny. But my main conclusion was "that Genesis is not the sort of book that can be refuted—or affirmed—on the basis of scientific or historical evidence . . . because its truths are metaphysical and ethical, not scientific or historical, because it teaches mainly about the status and human meaning of what *is* rather than about the mechanism by which things work or came to be." True, I did, in the end, directly confront the notions of "creation" and "evolution," but my intent here was to keep open the question of their meaning and relation, once again by correcting certain common misreadings of the text: Genesis 1 does not proclaim a static world created once and for always the same, does not clearly assert creation *ex nihilo*, and does not make clear precisely "how" creation was accomplished, i.e., whether by natural or "supernatural" processes, whether by "artistic making" or by the gradual self-differentiation of some ultimate substance.

This summary and statement of intent should correct the major misreadings; let me now address some specific comments.

Leo Blond suggests, rightly, that "the rules of the game of science" preclude questions of ultimate cause, but implies, wrongly, that faith or dread is the only remaining alternative. I suggest, instead, wonder, openness, and thought, precisely appropriate because we do not know the ultimate beginnings and causes. We see an intelligible, unfolding, hierarchic order. Why, and how, *this* order? Why anything at all, rather than nothing? Humility before these questions does not demand orthodoxy, but it should make one suspicious of scientific "proofs" of atheism.

Tim Donovan, Jr. thinks he—or rather, science—has offered such proof: in the big-bang theory of cosmogony. But this theory is descriptive, not causal, and, in any case, touches the "origin" only in the sense of *beginnings*, not in the sense of *source*. What "was" "there" "before" the big bang? Why this universe rather than some other, or none at all? Such metaphysical questions science will not ask and cannot answer, but they are not therefore meaningless.

It is encouraging to be told that one has stumbled onto what Rashi or Maimonides has taught. But Rabbi Nachum Braverman's comments exaggerate the similarities between my account and theirs. For one thing, the earth does not obediently bring forth the living animals as bidden (1:24), but God instead had to make them (1:25). More importantly, Rabbi Braverman insists that the word *bara'* means creation *ex nihilo*, but this is almost certainly post-hoc interpretation, and question-begging. The text itself is simply unclear. Much depends on how one reads the first verse: is it a summary or chapter heading (as I, following Cassuto, think) or does it describe a first creative act? And, on other matters, have the rabbinic sources stressed the "resistance" to the imposition and maintenance of order or the incompleteness (non-goodness) of man?

Robert Greengard will find his point made, with emphasis, in Part IV of my essay. Andrew Sanders will find the suggestion that biblical "creation" might indeed be evolutionary amply emphasized in Part V.

Thomas H. Jukes needs to learn to read. So angry is he with the creation scientists that he fails to see that my reading of Genesis 1 is intended to show that their entire activity has *no* scriptural warrant, and that scrupulous textual fidelity does not support their cosmogonic fundamentalisms. Further, if Mr. Jukes will consult the Hebrew original (King James did not write

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the Bible!), he will indeed find the cognate accusative construction, "let the earth *grass grass*," in the call (1:11), but "the earth *put forth* grass" in the execution (1:12). This discrepancy between speech and deed recurs regularly; for example, God tells the earth to *put forth* the land animals, but *He* had to *make* them. I repeat: only in the case of light is the deed letter for letter perfect to the command, a fact that seems to raise questions about God's omnipotence and the world's receptivity to order. And if Mr. Jukes would reread *in context* the other passages that shock him, he will find that he has misread and misunderstood me entirely.

To Solomon M. Landers, I point out that Genesis 1:16 tells of God's *making* the luminaries, the sun and the moon, and 1:17 tells (next) of God's *placing* them in the firmament, indeed "on" the fourth day (1:19). To support his insistence that "making" (*'asah*) is not creating (*bara'*), Mr. Landers relies only on outside evidence and also suggests that everything was created in verse 1:1. But though *bara'* is used only of God, *'asah* in Genesis 1 is used both of trees and of God, in the latter case seemingly synonomously with *bara'*: for example, "let us make [*'asah*] man" (1:26) and "God created [*bara'*] man" (1:27). And Genesis 2:3, literally translated, reads "which God created [*bara'*] to do [*'asah*]," i.e., to continue in activity. God, on the seventh day, rested from all the work that He had made (*'asah*), in His creating.

My general remarks above should help Joseph A. Miller see what I thought I was about. I did not argue that our present ignorance of the ultimate proves the biblical thesis of divine creation; I did argue that nothing we knew *dis*proved it—or could disprove it—especially if we do not know what we mean by "creation." I did indeed defend the biblical claim that man stands higher (but therefore less completed) than the other living things, not because of scientific ignorance or biblical authority, but simply because it is true. The so-called "recalcitrance of matter" was a medieval doctrine to explain why form and intelligible order were not always successfully imposed or maintained, say, during generation; it in no way implied that matter literally had will. Most readers of Genesis 1 will be surprised to see here some intimations of the same sort of teaching. Finally, Mr. Miller should be more skeptical about the metaphysical claims of scientists, who, by their own rules, should have nothing metaphysical to say. How, pray tell, can one "*mathematically* eliminate" the need for a first cause? How can the fact of evolution prove atheism? These facile conclusions deserve at least as much skepticism as the unwarranted fundamentalist claims for creation *ex nihilo* 6,000 years ago.

Don Schenk's comment serves to point up the difficulty with the idea of "literalness." I read Genesis quite literally; that is, I think every word counts. But the goal is to discern the guiding intention or meaning of the story, which is not necessarily had by taking each sentence as historical or factual assertion. Mr. Schenk believes in a "literal creation." Well and good. But then what *is* creation? Is it from nothing? Is it like the making of artifacts? Is it instantaneous or gradual—i.e., evolving? Leaving the latter-day theologians alone, what is Genesis 1's answer to these questions? Hard to say.

I thank Messrs. Oakes, Skillen, and Wachtfogel for their very thoughtful and stimulating letters. To Robert Oakes, I say that I am not *personally* troubled by the idea of "creation out of God's own substance," but only that I find no clear support for it in the text (perhaps because I do not have his "irrepressible pantheistic inclinations"). Indeed, Genesis 1:2 suggests not one principle but two: it seems clearly to distinguish the watery stuff and the divine spirit. To James W. Skillen: I regret not mentioning the seventh day, which later plays such a crucial role in the life of the children of Israel. The principle of separation, crucial to the whole account of creation, is further enshrined in the distinction between work and rest; later this metaphysical principle will be incorporated into human affairs as

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the principle of holiness, for which the separation of the Sabbath day is absolutely central. Because of my self-imposed task, I limited myself here to those beings familiar to us in ordinary experience and about which science might speak, i.e., the creatures of the "six days."

Joshua B. Wachtfogel and I are on the same track but he seems to carry the ethical thrust slightly beyond where I myself would go. Granted, the first chapter seeks to answer questions to which the Torah never again refers. But it does so in a way that—if looked at closely—inspires as many questions as it answers. Though it is written in the service of righteousness and holiness, and though it demands obedience of *conduct*, the Torah does not demand that we sacrifice our intellects upon the altar of piety. The subtleties and contradictions of the text always beckon the thoughtful reader to the interpretive task, and to a philosophical—and not merely an authoritative—reading. This may explain why, at least among Jews, there are so many independent theologians, and why none of us, myself included, is likely ever to be immune to dyslexia.

## Carlo Tresca

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I would like to comment on Stephen Schwartz's review of Dorothy Gallagher's book, *All the Right Enemies: The Life and Murder of Carlo Tresca* [Books in Review, November 1988]. As an old comrade of Tresca's, I have studied the case of his unsolved murder for more than forty years, in both Italy and the United States. While there has always been some fear—and suspicion—that the GPU was involved in the murder, I have always thought it clear that Tresca was murdered in New York by henchmen of the Italian fascists. After the murder, Carlo Tresca's companion, Margaret de Silver, initiated an investigation by John Nicholas Beffel, one of Tresca's political comrades, who found that the fascists were responsible. This was also the conclusion reached by another comrade, Ezio Taddei, who wrote a pamphlet about the murder.

Now, however, your reviewer, Stephen Schwartz, asserts that there may have been collaboration between the Communists and the Mafia. He writes that "there is sufficient evidence to believe that the actual killer was Carmine (Lilo) Galante" and that "two of the most notorious and extreme Stalinists in the history of the American union movement, the maritime leader Frederick N. ('Blackie') Myers and the warehouse organizer Louis Goldblatt, were *suspiciously close* to Galante on the night of the murder" (emphasis added).

But what exactly does Mr. Schwartz mean by "suspiciously close"? He has an obligation to spell it out more clearly and not leave us with a mere suspicion.

GIUSEPPE CALABREZE
Turin, Italy

STEPHEN SCHWARTZ writes:

Records of the two private investigations of the Carlo Tresca murder by John Beffel and Ezio Taddei are not available to me, so I cannot judge them. But the pamphlet, *Who Killed Carlo Tresca?*, published in 1945 by the Tresca Memorial Committee, left open the probability of Soviet involvement in the murder, and pointed to the possible implication of Enea Sormenti a.k.a. Vittorio Vidali, a key Communist functionary and strong-arm man.

In her book on the Tresca case, Dorothy Gallagher notes the "remarkable coincidence" that on the night of Tresca's murder, the Stalinist union leaders Blackie Myers and Louis Goldblatt were present in the same place as Carmen Galante—namely, the parole office to which Galante, a Mafia figure, had to report regularly. Both Myers and Goldblatt were affiliated with unions—the National Maritime Union and the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, respectively—that employed extensive violence against their political adversaries, including supporters of anarcho-syndicalism like Tresca. Conceivably, they might also have been connected with the notorious Vidali.

According to Miss Gallagher's book, the Mafiosi in the Tresca case also had other associations with the Stalinists, mainly through political connections involved with the Communist-dominated American Labor party.

What is now necessary in my opinion is for Dorothy Gallagher to disclose more fully the documentary sources of her information about the presence of Myers and Goldblatt in the parole office on the night of the Tresca murder and for this information to be thoroughly investigated and evaluated.

## Feminism

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In the last paragraph of Thomas J. Main's review of my book, *The Sisterhood* [Books in Review, October 1988], this sentence appears: "Missing altogether [from the feminist movement] are intellectuals who express their thoughts in the language developed by generations of political thinkers and actors, and whose frame of reference is the history of democratic institutions, their progress and their failings."

Mr. Main writes this—his entire review, in fact—as if I argued otherwise. Or as if I were a feminist polemicist and *The Sisterhood* a feminist apologia. Neither is true. I am simply a journalist ("celebrity journalist" is unfair) who was intrigued by the enormous change in the status of women in the past few decades and wanted to know how it had happened. In the long process of research, I came to some of the same conclusions as Mr. Main, including the feeling that many of the ideas of the movement were less compelling than the emotions behind them and the remarkable process by which they were disseminated.

That the media were the magic carpet carrying the women's rebellion throughout the world is the central theme of the book, which I arrived at by means of a reporter's ordinary queries and a consistency in the replies that completely surprised me. Over and over, I asked women in other countries how they came to consider themselves "feminists," and over and over the answer was: "The Americans. I read about it in the newspaper, saw it on television," etc. . . .

Often I would ask these women if they didn't find some of these displays a bit silly, and the gist of their replies was that it didn't matter. What mattered was the notion that *something* was wrong, that *somebody* was calling attention to it, and that this is what had activated them.

It followed that those who were best able to attract the attention of the media became the spokeswomen for feminism ("celebrities," if you choose) and that an examination of their media-magnetic characteristics—such as physical appearance or verbal flash and brass—was relevant. But though Mr. Main dwelled on these, he managed to ignore their purpose in

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the book—to convey the role of the media in creating a social revolution. . . . I am glad Mr. Main found *The Sisterhood* an "illuminating" work, but despite what I thought were sufficient illustrations of its theme, he seems to have missed it.

In addition, he comes dangerously close to the same trap that, for a while at least, captured the feminists: that is, too close an analogy to the black civil-rights movement (as in "woman as nigger"). . . . Obviously, the differences between men and women are far deeper and more complex than a superficial variation in skin color; the opportunity for "equality" is much higher for blacks, therefore, and the battlefield ideology much simpler. One would have to repeal the laws of biology to postulate women as, strictly speaking, "equal" to men, given, at the very least, the requirements of childbirth. *Justice,* on the other hand, a feasible goal for women, is also harder to define.

The fact is that formulating the role of "the other" sex (in Simone de Beauvoir's terminology), extending as it does into love, marriage, childrearing, and, yes, eroticism, has occupied the minds and work of artists, great and small, since the beginning of time. (Norman Mailer was right in sensing his territory here.) The chances that the feminists would produce the final, definitive explication in what was, really, hardly more than one short, clamorous decade—from 1963 to 1973—were slim.

Justice, nonetheless, matters. If these insistent voices—through slogans, howls of outrage, or even Mr. Main's much disdained "journalism"—brought that end closer for women, which they certainly appear to have done, why deny them that credit?

MARCIA COHEN

New York City

THOMAS J. MAIN writes:

It is clear from her letter that Marcia Cohen and I disagree on the meaning and importance of the feminist movement, especially as it developed during the 1960's and 1970's. But rather than respond point by point to her defense of the movement, I will note only that my evaluation of Miss Cohen's book—as distinct from its subject—was broadly positive. It is true that I wrote that *The Sisterhood* is not scholarly but journalistic and even gossipy at times, and I stand by these characterizations. However, I also wrote that this approach is appropriate—at least up to a point—owing to the fact that the feminists themselves placed enormous emphasis on their personal lives during this period. Miss Cohen is of course entitled to disagree with my reservations regarding a movement which placed the most intimate details of its adherents' lives on public display, and whose essence is therefore often better captured by gossip than by scholarship, but I doubt that we can resolve our differences in this forum.

## Agnon and Heine

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Cynthia Ozick has done superbly well with S.Y. Agnon Englished ["Agnon's Antagonisms," December 1988], but there are even more

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imbrications to be unearthed on this subject. . . . I'll bring up just three. . . .

1. In searching beyond Agnon's twinkling comment to Saul Bellow, "Ah, we have him [Heine] beautifully transplanted into Hebrew. He is safe," Miss Ozick is intuitively on target. Underlying the national "we" is Ahad Ha'am's essay, "The Question of Jewish Culture." . . . Ahad Ha'Am writes:

> Our "Jewish literature" is often taken in a wide sense to include everything written by a Jewish writer in any language. If we accept that definition, we could not complain of the poverty of Jewish literature, which would include Heine's love poems. . . . But the definition is fundamentally wrong. A people's literature is the literature written in its national language. . . . Thus, for example, the name of Levanda, who wrote popular sketches of Russian-Jewish life, is almost forgotten. But Smolenskin's stories, similar to those of Levanda in subject and much inferior, . . . are still widely read. . . . I can find no explanation except that Smolenskin wrote in Hebrew, and Levanda in Russian.

Agnon, in cautioning Bellow that he had better see to it that his books are translated into Hebrew immediately because they would survive only in the Holy Tongue, jests not. . . . Having Heine beautifully translated into Hebrew not only restores him to his Jewish roots, but ensures that his poetry will survive. . . .

2 When Agnon designates the earthquake as a judgment that came upon those who abandoned Jerusalem . . . , he is drawing upon his own experiences. Agnon has said that his writings were destroyed by a fire in Hamburg because he left the land of Israel to go to Berlin (conversation with Dr. A.M. Habermann, reported in *Hado'ar*, May 24, 1974). Agnon's self-condemnation has its source in the Talmud and Midrash. Elimelech and his sons were punished because they were leaders of their generation and they left the land (Bethlehem) to go abroad (Moab). . . .

3. Gamzu in Agnon's story "Edo and Enam" who, Miss Ozick suggests, was left blind in one eye because of a sandstorm, "as a divine judgment for preferring intrinsic beauty to the discipline of the codes of conduct," has his counterpart, in fact, in the talmudic sage Nahum of Gimzo who inflicted blindness and other bodily defects upon himself for neglecting the code of conduct. . . .

Having traced in my own research on Agnon many of the sources in his multifaceted "allusions and elusive echoings," I find that with every new archeological find in our treasure tomes of tradition, Agnon becomes dearer and clearer. Agnon Hebraized is the Jewish people writ large.

RUTH BIRNBAUM
Department of Judaic Studies
University of Massachusetts
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TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is gratifying that Cynthia Ozick alludes to Heinrich Heine in her article. It is also good to know that Heine's poem, *"Die Lorelei,"* which could not be suppressed in Nazi Germany, is "safe," according to the anecdote Miss Ozick relates about Agnon and Saul Bellow.

From the thrust of her article it can be inferred that Miss Ozick sees in Heine's depiction of the mythical figure of the siren of the Rhine and her song leading to "death" by "allurement" nothing more than a moral fable. But in fact *"Die Lorelei"* stands as an immortal work in world literature. . . .

If Cynthia Ozick, who is, of course, well read in foreign literatures, sees in the figure of Lorelei a moral, a warning, perhaps a caution against the danger of paganism, then she may be giving a proper interpretation. If, however, Heinrich Heine's *Jewishness* is thereby being questioned, then attention should be drawn to Heine's many poetic works with Jewish themes, from his early ballad *Belsazar* (based on Daniel 5 and a Passover hymn), to his novel *Der Rabbi von Bacharach*, to his *Hebrew Melodies* which include heartfelt poetry confirming his Jewish commitment.

HENRY REGENSTEINER
New York City

## "Witness"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Eric J. Sundquist has provided a magnificent literary illumination of Whittaker Chambers's *Witness* ["'Witness' Recalled," December 1988]. He cites as well several possible reasons for the recent neglect of that book. I would like to add one more. When *Witness* first appeared in 1952, the spiritual status of the Communist idea was entirely different from what it is today. We had read, for example, *The God That Failed*, a collection of important essays by intellectuals who had renounced Communism; Communism had "failed," but it was still a "god." We had read George Orwell's *1984*, in which the "party" and Commissar O'Brien are all-powerful. In Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, the idea of Communism is so powerful that Rubashov willingly sacrifices himself to it. . . . Whittaker Chambers's *Witness* belongs in this same genre; its thesis is that Communism is evil but spiritually powerful, and that it is going to win historically.

But 1952 was a long time ago. We now know that Bukharin, upon whom Rubashov was based, did not willingly sacrifice himself to the revolutionary ideal; he was simply murdered, Al Capone-style, by Stalin. And Commissar O'Brien is not in power in England; Margaret Thatcher is. So at least one reason *Witness* is relatively neglected today is that its informing vision seems dated.

JEFFREY HART
Dartmouth College
Hanover, New Hampshire

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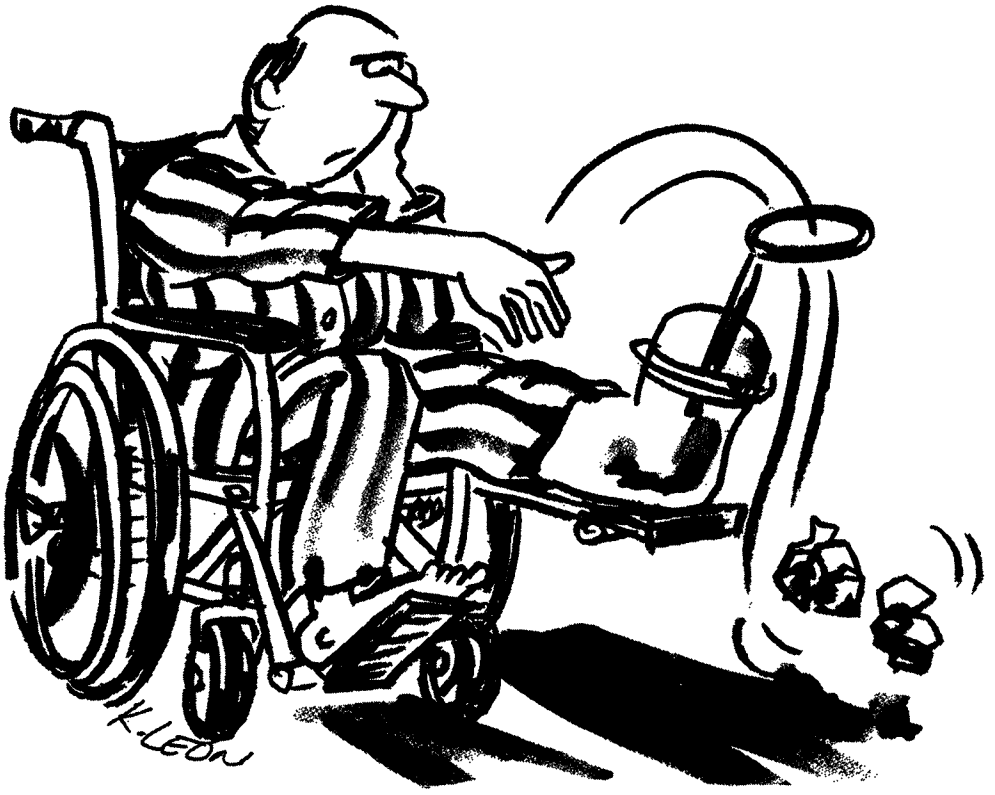


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# Can Poland Ever Be Free?

*Alain Besançon*

To many observers it now seems that over the last year or so Poland has been on the move again, if not so dramatically as in 1980. The famous "roundtable" around which, for years, it was hoped that the leaders of the Communist regime and the representatives of Solidarity might one day sit and negotiate has actually been convened, and a number of meetings have indeed been held. Yet notwithstanding this initial movement, and the possibility that opposition forces may be brought into the parliament, the atmosphere in Poland today is not one of expectancy and vigor but rather of lassitude, indecision, and defeat—strangely so, since the objective situation would seem in many ways more favorable than in 1980-81. At that time, nothing impeded a Soviet invasion of Poland and, as we now know, Brezhnev was prepared to undertake one if it came to that. Today, for Gorbachev, an invasion of Poland would mean forfeiting the entire geopolitical hand on which he has staked the survival of his regime; nor is it certain that in the Soviet Union's tattered condition he would even be able to muster the material means for an invasion.

In any case, the Poles have a considerable margin of safety to play with, and they could go a great deal farther than they did in 1980 without incurring the slightest risk. But no one in a position of responsibility has taken it upon himself to advance the sorts of clear, radical demands that other peoples trapped in the Soviet embrace, like the less numerous and more fragmented Armenians and Estonians, have not hesitated to put forward. Mobilized, the forty million Poles with their "critical mass" could totter the Soviet empire; but Poland is not mobilized. Rather, it gives the impression today of a prisoner whose cell has been unbolted but who nevertheless remains transfixed and all but immovable within.

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To appreciate the evident failure of the Poles to capitalize fully on their opportunity it is necessary to review the principal actors in this aborted drama.

First among them is the present Pope. The émigré Soviet historian Alexander Zinoviev has recently remarked that one word from this Pope is all it would have taken to spark a revolution in Poland. An audacious statement; but the fact is that the word was not, and probably could not be, forthcoming.

Several elements in John Paul II's world view account for his silence. One is the general notion, stated frequently by the Pontiff, of an essential symmetry between capitalism and socialism, two systems perceived by him as equally if somewhat differently bad, and with regard to which he believes the Church must preserve an equivalent distance.

Another factor, characteristic not just of the Pope but of a large segment of the Roman Catholic Church, is a certain disdain for the political; this flows in part out of the perfectly correct belief that the Church itself does not and cannot constitute a political party, but in even greater part out of the feeling—very appropriate to our time—that political conflict is in itself evil, contrary to the ideals of charity and universal good will toward all, whether friend or foe. (In fact, to have enemies at all is regarded as a moral flaw in this vision.)

Finally, accepting the notion of a world divided between socialism and capitalism (itself, by the way, a socialist idea); declining to bless wholeheartedly either the one or the other; and rejecting political conflict, the Church has espoused instead an apolitical vision of a world governed by the "social doctrine" of Christianity, which it sees as complementing the secular doctrine of human rights. Practically speaking, the Church's role is thus confined to exhorting humanity to observe certain prepolitical (or, as it likes to think, suprapolitical) relations. Fidelity to this role would certainly prevent the Polish Pope from speaking that word to his fellow Poles which, according to Zinoviev, would have led on to liberation.

The second major actor in the Polish drama is the Polish Church. This Church assuredly shares



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the quietistic view of the Pontiff, but in any case would have been persuaded of the merits of such a stance by the evidence of its own material and social condition. As an ecclesiastical body the Church in Poland enjoys, by any standard, an extraordinary prosperity: ordained clergy are extremely numerous, there is an abundance of vocations, the seminaries are full of students, Catholicism basks in an atmosphere of universal respect and massive popular observance. A Polish bishop is shown a degree of reverence and popular affection, and enjoys a degree of relative comfort, unknown to his counterparts in Western Europe. The Church is also a principal font of "influence" in society. It would take exceptional qualities of mind and spirit were its leaders not to conclude that, when all is said and done, the political regime in place is really not so bad. And thus the religious leaders of Poland have yielded to the quite understandable impulse of identifying what is good for the Church with what is good for the country, and what is good for the ecclesiastical corps with what is good for the Church.

The third actor is the leadership of Solidarity. This is a group of diverse origins. Some come out of the intellectual world; their education is Catholic, or else Communist and leftist, in which case they have traversed a well-worn route of intellectual dissidence. Others are from a worker background, but have been decisively formed by their contact with the intellectuals. Lech Walesa, the nominal head of Solidarity, is a worker of strong personal temperament who has never made even a pretense of freeing himself from his mentors, whether lay or clerical. These men, themselves, have rapidly become well known, and not just in Poland but around the world; indeed, their celebrity in foreign parts has helped to cement their status at home, perhaps not least in their own eyes. Yet they have been prevented, on the one hand by the totalitarian system, on the other hand by their own political line, from organizing and effectively directing the mass movement which supports them. All that remains to them is to pose as trustworthy intermediaries, interlocutors between the Polish people and the Polish regime.

THE fourth actor is the Communist party. One of the strangest aspects of the entire Polish drama is that the significance of this party has been denied or downplayed by its opposition. In 1980, when Solidarity was at its strongest, its leaders used to say that the Communist party had ceased to exist, that no one believed in Communism any longer; the second proposition was considered, wrongly, proof of the first. In fact, the Polish Communist party, though feebler by a million members, remained even then a party of two million, and was clever enough to prepare meticulously and, by means of the home army, execute a counteroffensive that succeeded to perfection on December 13, 1981. To be sure, Solidarity's leaders could declare that it was no longer the party but the militia that held power—a militia whose patriotism, incidentally, they continued to vouch for—but to anyone with eyes to see it was obvious that the militia was doing the work of the party.

Since then this same party has run the country the more easily because it is the only body in Poland with a policy. And the policy in question has been classically Leninist: to divide, to discredit the enemy, to destroy his resources—that is to say, the material, economic, intellectual, and social bases that permit him to resist. A pity that the enemy is all of Poland, and that all Poland must be destroyed; but there will always be time, once the obstacles have been removed, to "construct socialism" again.

The party was most adroit in implementing this policy. It largely shucked the outmoded and counterproductive paraphernalia of Stalinism, the banners and bombast, the mass arrests and the mass obfuscations. But the abandonment of Leninist rhetoric, while leading many to conclude that the party no longer believed in the thing itself, simply enabled it all the better to conduct a Leninist policy, which it now justified in terms of a kind of pseudo-realpolitik.

There were two principal arguments. First: "If we don't do the dirty work ourselves, the Soviets will come and do it for us." In this way the Polish party could represent itself as the people's protector, ready to sacrifice its own self-respect and even to repress its spontaneous feelings in order to shield the homeland from greater misfortune. Second: "There can be no question of political reform as long as the Polish economy is in crisis. No matter what kind of government Poland has or will have, the first priority will be to build a decent prosperity. Why, then, thrust aside the Communist party, just when we need the cooperation of every political and social element in the country? Ideology aside, anyone who refuses to cooperate in this task, by fomenting strikes or otherwise contributing to lowered productivity, is no patriot."

The Communist party thus became the voice of economic reason, of the common welfare, even of moral virtue. And in this way, it created the circumstances that allowed it to remain in power (which is, after all, the alpha and omega of Communist activity). On the ideological level the strategy entailed dissembling the party's purposes by cloaking them in natural and universal, or rather pseudo-natural and pseudo-universal, language: pseudo, because the words were dictated not by nature and normal human desires but by political calculus. In accordance with its political objectives, and with an eye to the sectors of society it was seeking to influence, the party decided what themes to press and the terms—humanistic, Christian, patriotic, technocratic—in which to press them. Meanwhile, on the practical level, the strategy

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entailed an effort to remove the party's policy, not to mention the struggle for power itself, from the realm of permissible debate, and to confine discussion to a single, narrowly marked-off area—namely, the economy.

So much for the strategy followed by the party since 1980. What about the strategy followed by the opposition? It appears, sadly, to have glided along on tracks laid down for it by the party.

The idea behind the opposition's strategy was to make a revolution in Poland without saying so, and unbeknownst to the Communist party. That is, opposition forces aimed at carving out from the larger totalitarian sphere a space within which civil society might reconstitute itself and gain a certain autonomy. By taking an active role in the economy and, especially, the culture, the opposition hoped little by little to push the Communist party into a corner where it could remain formally in control but with its power progressively devoid of substance.

Among the other elements in the Polish drama, the Roman Catholic Church in particular found that this strategy suited it very well. The opposition's almost fetishistic invocation of the word "dialogue" was another way of expressing the Church's own conscious disavowal of political conflict, or of the thought that there might be an enemy and that he might have to be vanquished.

At an earlier historical moment, the late Cardinal Wyszinski solemnly declared (at the Second Vatican Council in 1962) that for Christians there could be no question of placing trust in the "Dialectical-Materialist State"; it was vain, he said, to conclude agreements with such a state because *in principle* it did not hold itself bound to respect them. In so saying, the Polish prelate showed a profound and essential understanding of Communist politics; however numerous and however grave were the compromises he himself judged it wise to strike with the Dialectical-Materialist State, this understanding inspired confidence and reflected credit on his policy.

His successor, Cardinal Glemp, has not shown a similar understanding. In the Moscow *News* (November 6, 1988), he expressed himself as follows:

> Our Church is an integral part of Polish society, and thus ardently desires to help the homeland during this difficult period. Ecclesiastic officials, to the best of their abilities, wish to contribute to the solution of our domestic problems. For the Church this means in the first place prayer, which allows us to see with serenity the perspectives, the correct paths, to follow. The Church has accumulated a rich heritage of experience in the context of different social systems. . . . The new prime minister has courageously taken on the hardest challenges. We know how difficult the present situation is, and we must not complicate the labor of government. To the contrary, we wish to participate in creating conditions that will allow the country to make progress. The Church will not assume an active role in state policy, but lay Catholics of proven competence and expertise can lend their support to the common task.

From this text it emerges that the Church declines to hold the Communist party responsible for the material and moral ruination of the country; that, to the contrary, by giving credit to the party for its efforts "to resolve domestic problems," the Church not only confers legitimacy upon it but also endows it with a positive patriotic mission; and that in authorizing lay Catholics to play a role only of junior collaborators, the Church acknowledges the right of the Communist party to lead Poland and to act as the guardian of the common good.

Of course, these propositions do not express the unanimous view of the Church, and perhaps not even the complete view of the Cardinal. Yet for all that, the most visible function of the Church does consist today in eschewing the concrete political struggle in favor of piety and symbolism. Memorial services, floral crosses, novenas, pilgrimages, masses without number give the community of the faithful a feeling of activity—ersatz activity.

Far be it from anyone to deny the importance and efficacy of prayer and ritual in their proper place. But when they substitute for action where action is called for, religion can too easily become (in the notorious words of Marx) "the moan of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the opium of the people."

The Dialectical-Materialist State, for its part, has not failed to exploit this situation by indulging the Polish Church in the Church's own inclination. Local parish houses sprout up like mushrooms, more and more hours are devoted to religious instruction, and the clergy (despite the murder of Father Jerzy Popieluszko in 1984 and a few unfortunate incidents since then) enjoys a kind of immunity and all sorts of material benefits in a country where these are rare. But the extraordinary expansion of the Church's clerical structures is not a sign of good health. "Let us not forget," writes Cardinal Glemp, "that the Church has been at man's side for two thousand years." It is likely, however, that many Poles do not feel, or feel less and less, that the Church is on their side, and avowals like this one may even lead some to conclude that it is on the "other" side. The ecclesiastical bubble in Poland could abruptly burst; in the history of the Church it is not unheard of for moments of apparent triumph to be followed by spiritual debacles.

And Solidarity? In 1980 the Polish opposition took the form of giant strikes more or less orchestrated by Solidarity. In

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essence these strikes *were* a movement of national liberation. But Solidarity strove mightily to disguise the fact, to present a political movement as a social movement. Above all, it did not contest the socialist nature of the regime, but claimed only to be opposing the "real existing socialism" of Gierek (or, later, Kania) in the name of true socialism, authentic socialism. Significantly, when Solidarity first requested support in France, it approached the branch of French labor that was the most deeply imbued with the classic ideals of revolutionary utopianism. And in every Western country to which it appealed, Solidarity was careful to position itself on the Left.

In the view of Solidarity, nothing would more deeply embarrass a regime that pretended to derive its legitimacy from the working class than to have the working class turn against it. Through the prestige of the socialist idea—the sanctity of the struggle for union rights, the glorious ideal of "worker management"—Solidarity would wrest from a stymied Communist government that longed-for space in which all of society might in the end draw a breath of fresh air.

But there were two problems here. First, a huge popular movement was now, voluntarily, speaking the language and invoking the rhetoric which for forty years an alien regime had been trying, in vain, to inculcate by force. To challenge a socialist workers' state in the name of socialism and of the working class was inevitably (though of course unintentionally) to reinforce rather than to undermine the ideological foundations of the regime.

Second, Solidarity's platform introduced a fatal confusion, both abroad and at home. Abroad, public opinion came to regard the Polish strikes in the familiar categories of labor unrest in the West. To exaggerate slightly, the strikes of shipyard workers in Gdansk seemed to many people no different in kind from job actions by air-traffic controllers in the United States. Such a construal of what was happening in Poland as a "normal" economic phenomenon pleased Western diplomats, who were thereby relieved of the distressing onus of having to take a position on a movement of national liberation.

But the confusion was most pernicious within Poland itself. For Poles were caught in a dilemma. They wanted freedom and independence, but their leaders refused to speak of these things other than by allusion. Instead, they persisted in demanding a "dialogue" with the authorities that was aimed at achieving not political pluralism but only union recognition. The limits imposed on itself by Solidarity were thus precisely those the government sought to impose on it. Having crippled one of its own hands at a moment when both were already tied behind its back, Solidarity was doomed to a struggle that could only strengthen the very government it was trying to force into surrender.

A final consequence was that the leaders of Solidarity, having deprived themselves of the sorts of clear statements of direction that could be understood by all, impeded their own recruitment efforts and paralyzed their attempts at organization for the future. How were young people, who knew at bottom what they wanted, supposed to embark upon a true political apprenticeship, upon true political combat, when they were being directed instead to take instruction in union activity and forms of cultural protest and styles of religious processions? Quickly enough the original Solidarity team, decimated by repression, was made aware of its isolation and of the tragic lack of a successor generation.

EIGHT years have passed. Despite everything that has happened in the Communist world, despite the faint signs of movement in Poland itself, the political situation has not really evolved. Abroad, people have gotten accustomed to the idea that the Polish question should be and is being handled jointly by the U.S. State Department, the Vatican, and the Soviet ambassador in Warsaw. At home, Poland is immersed in a condition of putrefaction which, because it beggars the imagination, is protected by the incapacity of the Western mind to imagine it. And in the ranks of the opposition, again notwithstanding the efforts at "dialogue" with the authorities, disquieting signs of defeat have become manifest. I will mention only two or three.

There is, to begin with, a tendency to take refuge in "culture." This, indeed, is a syndrome observable throughout the Soviet bloc, but it is particularly acute in Poland. Long suffocated by censorship, by lack of information, by a ban on travel, by state control of the written and spoken word, the Polish intelligentsia today speaks, reads, writes, and publishes at will, or almost at will, and travels freely within the limits of its financial means. This is an immense change, and it has had the effect of relieving an immense pressure. But the government perceived, correctly, that in granting these concessions it would make Polish intellectuals happy enough to be diverted from their drive to forge organic connections with a restive populace. Literary life in Poland (as in other "peoples' democracies") counts for more, and is conducted with greater intensity, than in the West; this much is lost for politics.

Another disturbing sign is the extent of the hopes invested by Poles in Gorbachev and *perestroika*. It must surely betoken serious internal disarray, not to mention a willful loss of political memory, for leaders of the opposition, and not the least important among them, to have begun to dream of salvation coming to Poland from *that* quarter.

Western aid, both public and private, also contributes to the general debility. The Polish external debt stands today at $40 billion, and there is no question of its being repaid. But precisely for that reason, lending by Western banks, industries,

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and governments has fallen off. One of the forms of blackmail practiced by the Polish government on the Polish population now goes like this: "Work hard, accept and implement the economic reforms, and then the manna of Western credits may return." The appeal cannot but further subvert a people's already weakened will to resist.

Since 1980, in addition to large-scale public aid to the regime, an endless convoy chartered by various private Western organizations has descended on Poland, stopping in local parishes to disgorge provisions, medicines, and other necessities that are so cruelly absent there. The exercise has had a most beneficial impact on the moral horizons of the suppliers, many of whom, open-mouthed and wide-eyed, have discovered socialist reality for the first time. But on Polish morale the effect has been less healthy.

Certainly it is comforting for people to know that they have not been forgotten. But this aid brings with it, in classic fashion, all the complications of charity, depressing the spirit of self-reliance and deflecting attention from the need for political struggle. It also inflates the importance of local intermediaries and of those who distribute these precious goods, which is to say most frequently churchmen. The latter, grandly dispensing spiritual welfare with one hand, material welfare with the other, may have developed in turn a rather softened view of the extent of the Polish tragedy.

But it is to Lech Walesa that we can turn for the best description of the political impasse in which his movement is now essentially locked. On a visit to Paris this past December, he paid lavish tribute to Gorbachev's *perestroika*. In an interview with *Le Monde*, he ventured that Solidarity was approaching victory, then added:

> But let's be clear, victory does not mean the overthrow of this Communist party or of this government, but a different sharing of existing structures. The greatest error would have been to contemplate the seizure of power. That, that was forbidden us. We need state power to proceed toward reform.

Even, he was asked, this particular state power?

> We don't like them, we are angry with them, but they are indispensable. There is not yet a Poland in which people are organized who could seriously think of governing. There are individuals, but on a countrywide scale that is insufficient. There's a long way to go before the person with the best program is able to run the country.

Finally, Walesa stated that he was afraid of anarchy and of a thirst for vengeance among the disorganized and desperate young.

So the head of Solidarity appears to have ruled out not only victory but even the fight for victory. Content with asking for more "dialogue," he now puts himself forward as a counselor, as a man of influence. He fully acknowledges that the present government is necessary, as much to promote "reform" as to forestall any inclination the Polish people might entertain to avenge forty years of ruin and oppression. He notes the frailty of the political environment in Poland, though not the fact that his strategy has inescapably helped to enfeeble it. He discreetly proposes to be of service.

In all, it would seem that from the viewpoint of the government of Poland, if Walesa did not exist it would have been necessary to invent him. In the candid and telling words of one maverick delegate to the recent talks, "The government is looking for a partner willing to share responsibility for unpleasant measures that are necessary to improve the economy. They want in Solidarity a kind of fireman specializing in preserving social peace." In any event, that government today appears prepared to support Walesa in good Leninist fashion, as the rope supports the hanged man.

WHAT is to be done? What can be done? It is not for someone sitting in Western comfort, far from the theater of events, to propose a specific line of conduct. And nothing, certainly, could be less helpful—not to say downright stupid or even criminal—than to advise the Poles simply to revolt. The Poles know all too well what the price of open insurrection is likely to be; that both the Church and Solidarity wish to avoid paying that price is something we cannot but approve wholly. The question, though, is what might be done *without* running an unacceptable risk, or by running the least risk compatible with the hoped-for gain. Here, the following very general observations may be of use.

1. The Communist system has entered upon a general crisis. Its center, the USSR, is in need of a respite—to import Western technology and credit, to modernize the military, to shore up the position of the party, and so forth. During this period the Soviet Union needs the European "peoples' democracies" to remain quiet, and particularly Poland, the weak link in the chain. That being so, however, it seems to me that the function of Solidarity and the Church should not be one of helping the Soviet Union to navigate safely through the difficult passage before it. They do not have to stand surety for Gorbachev's worldwide campaign of blandishment and extortion.

2. It would be desirable if the Polish opposition would state clearly its objectives: freedom and independence. It should denounce Communism as such, the illegitimacy of a government that does not derive from the consent of the governed; and it should demand free elections. Other national groupings in the Communist orbit have done as much, and at greater peril. One frequently hears Poles saying, "Of course we want freedom and independence. Everyone hates the regime. But what is the point of proclaiming it? Words don't matter, what matters is concrete action, daily

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struggle, victory by small steps." Unfortunately, the small steps are leading not to victory but to cooptation, and what goes without saying would go still better with the saying. In the present situation, true actions are true words, words which might at last break down the tower of lies that is the Communist regime. As experience has shown, speaking words of truth carries a finite risk. That is why the Communist party fears them so, and does everything to prevent them being said, or twists them at the last moment even as they hang on the lips of the person audacious enough to think but not to voice them.

3. Only words such as these have a hope of reaching and galvanizing the Polish people. For contrary to the Marxist vision, so curiously resurrected by Solidarity, national emancipation is brought about not by the leading actions of the proletariat but by an entire society, guided by its natural leaders and elites (who of course may derive from working-class origins) and mobilized around a limited, clear platform: freedom and independence.

4. Political fights are never won by those who decline to enter them. In the face of an adversary as formidable as the Polish Communist party, allied with and backed by Soviet power; in the face of an adversary for whom political struggle is both *raison d'être* and the only mode of existence, to refuse to engage in politics, to hide behind symbols and artful dodges, is to concede defeat in advance.

During his stay in Paris, Walesa expressed disillusionment with European society; it seemed to him debilitated, drowsy with comfort. To be sure: but poverty and oppression and the all-pervasive lie debilitate and deaden, too; and besides, Poland is a European country. What is needed to rouse it is political combat, by which (to repeat) I hardly mean an insurrection undertaken romantically, without any hope of success, but quite the opposite: the prudent, astute, bold exploitation of already existing opportunity.

How best to take advantage of Soviet disarray; how to win the active support of Western Europe and the United States; what links to forge with the Baltic countries and with the Ukraine; how to educate the future leaders of the nation—these, it seems to me, are the questions that a Marshal Pilsudski would be asking today. They are questions his would-be heirs should be asking as well, before the legacy of Polish independence sinks forever into emptiness, inaction, and impotence.

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# Behind "Who Is a Jew"

## *A Letter from Jerusalem*

Edward Norden

FOLLOWING a frigid winter which was blamed on the greenhouse effect, the apricot trees of the Judean hills, visible from the Jerusalem Hilton, are in bloom. Gone from the Hilton and also from the King David Hotel are the representatives of American Jewish organizations who hurried over at the end of last year. They were aghast at the outcome of the Knesset elections, and appalled by the prospect that one of the first acts of the new government here would be to write it into law that although our brethren abroad may be doing well, they are pretty poor Jews. The American visitors had a message for our politicians: there was imminent danger of mutiny on the Western front if the Knesset, in a Likud or Labor deal with the rabbis, tampered with the Law of Return.

All that might now seem like ancient history. The headlines in Israel these days are not about midnight meetings between politicians and rabbis to form a government, but about cuts in public spending, price hikes, unemployment, fistfights between Israeli soldiers and Jewish settlers in what the world knows as the West Bank, pharmaceuticals to be manufactured by Qaddafi, and a new administration in Washington which, right after it takes care of the deficit, will be free to cooperate with the PLO in the search for peace. The only story held over, it would seem, is the Palestinian uprising—not a mile from the King David, euphoric Arab kids are throwing rocks and Molotov cocktails at Jewish buses.

The rapid changes in the headlines are as typical of this country as they are deceptive. It's true that to live here is to belong to the Crisis-of-the-Month Club. But anyone who holds out for more than a few years comes to realize that all the crises in Israel can be classified under three main headings, and every apparently fresh crisis is really only the latest installment of one which previously simmered down or was upstaged.

The three permanent crises, the trio of open questions, are the Economic, the Cultural-Religious, and the Military-Geopolitical. They can be visualized as three pots cooking on a single stove, any and all liable to boil over at any time. Practically the only function of an Israeli government is to attend to the pot closest to spilling onto the floor. The Cultural-Religious pot, having boiled up as never before and brought those American Jewish VIP's flying over, is bubbling peacefully now, thanks to the formation of another so-called national-unity government. To forget this particular pot would be tempting. It would also be a profound mistake. For not only does the Cultural-Religious question remain open—contrary to conventional wisdom, it is the crucial one.

This question is crucial, and very old. How we Israeli Jews finally answer it, or continue to beg it, will largely determine how we allocate the wealth we make or are granted, and how we pursue or steer clear of the vision or chimera of peace with the Palestinians. Anybody who hopes to understand what might pit us against each other and against our brethren in Exile, as well as what, until now, has bound us strongly together, could therefore do worse than put away the newspaper. He would do well to look back, not just a few months, but all the way to Israel's first exercise in democracy.

### II

THE skullcapped parties in the 1949 elections ran together. No fewer than four of them combined—the two factions of Mizrahi ("Spiritual Center") and the two factions of Agudat Yisrael ("Israel Association," Israel signifying nothing nationalistic, but rather all the descendants of Jacob, who was renamed after wrestling with the angel). Mizrahi's bosses and voters were the observant, usually clean-shaven Jews who had always gone along with the unbelieving Zionists in the land of Israel. Those of Aguda were the bearded, black-coated people whom the foreign press here calls the ultra-Orthodox and who until a few years before had shunned the Zionists and their institutions like

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the plague. In 1949 this unified list garnered a little over 12 percent of the popular vote, or 16 Knesset seats out of 120. But its unity was ephemeral. By the next elections, in 1951, it had splintered into its parts, with Mizrahi, revamped into the National Religious Party (NRP), winning 10 seats, and the anti-Zionist Aguda five.

But can a party which goes into the Knesset truly be religious? Or anti-Zionist? No and yes.

The anti-Zionism of Aguda was and is no accident. Its founders, rabbis all, understood as early as 1912, when they gathered in the Polish town of Katowice, that by striving to revolutionize and normalize Jewish life, and reintroduce us collectively into the family of nations, the Zionists were dispensing with the messiah and menacing Judaism as Judaism had been adapted to the Exile, especially in Eastern Europe. This Judaism, this culture, had first been placed on the defensive by rumors of Enlightenment and Emancipation. Now came Zionism. The basic facts are fairly common knowledge today, even among American Jews. What is less well-known is that until almost all the Jews in Eastern Europe were exterminated, Aguda was—in spite of Zionism, Communism, Bundism, socialism, and assimilation—maybe the most popular party among them, based as it was and is on the great hasidic dynasties.

Though almost none of their flocks survived the Nazis, more than a few of the leading hasidic rabbis, and with them this anti-Zionist ideology, did. Those rabbis who escaped, and didn't settle in Brooklyn, came here, where they began reconstituting their power and shattered communities. To do this, it was necessary to get help from the Zionists—help, for example, in bringing the head of the Ger dynasty out of Poland to Jerusalem in 1940. In return for this assistance, the Aguda pragmatically began segregating its ideology from some of its practice. It coordinated with the Zionists for about fifteen years—that is, just before, during, and right after the extermination—while clinging to the anti-Zionist faith and continuing to drum it into the heads of its children.

This anti-Zionism was compartmentalized, not watered down. It came out in a thousand telling ways during Israel's first years. Yiddish, not Hebrew, was what you heard spoken by the strictly-brought-up kids in the Mea Shearim quarter of Jerusalem and the Bnei Brak neighborhood of Tel Aviv. They did not show the flag on Independence Day, they did not stand up for *Hatikvah*, they omitted the prayer for the welfare of the state, and God forbid that they should serve in the army.

Yet the *Gedolei HaTorah*, the Aguda's Council of Torah Sages comprising the rabbis and headmasters of each dynasty, instructed the party's politicians to enter the Zionist parliament. One of these politicians, Rabbi Yitzhak Meir Levin, the Gerer *rebbe*'s son-in-law, actually put his signature to the Declaration of Independence. This scandalized the super-purists in Mea Shearim, that is, Neturei Karta ("Guardians of the City") and the Satmar Hasidim. The Aguda had to justify running for and serving in the godless Knesset and even joining the government—Levin was Israel's first minister of the dole. Of course, no politician-rabbi of this stripe was converted to Zionism, if Zionism is the project of "normalizing" the Jews. Nor did the Aguda rabbis confess that their emotions might have gotten the better of them in those heady days when the Jewish state, after nineteen centuries, and only three years after the gas chambers shut down, was resurrected. But it was, to say the least, hard to ignore Israel.

Some of the anti-Zionist rabbis split hairs—they intimated that although the new state could never do the messiah's job, it might, if it became truly Jewish, prepare the way for him. This was perilously close to the Mizrahi position, to the strategy of stealing Zionism from the Zionists, and it was not put into so many words. The justification offered for getting involved in Israeli politics was pragmatic, not to say fiscal. The notables of Aguda's ruling council had made up their minds that for the funds for which the Jewish state could be milked, and which they needed for the schools and soup kitchens of their poor, maimed communities, supping with the devil was acceptable.

SATAN appeared in the person of David Ben-Gurion, Zionist hero and Israel's first Prime Minister. Here was a Jew who put all his considerable energy into the forging of a New Jew, one without skullcap or earlocks, a Jew who would use Hebrew in the street, who would eat whatever he liked, who would know much of the Bible by heart but none of the Talmud, who would read Plato in the original and do yoga, who would be a farmer, a cop, a scientist, a soldier in his own nation-state. BG was a hard-nosed kind of visionary. Unlike Martin Buber up at the Hebrew University, he was blessed with a biography and an ideology preempting sentimentality about the black coats. He knew they were not picturesque and heartwarming. Nor were they all gentle—in the old days, Ben-Gurion and his Zionist friends had at least once been set upon and thrashed by Hasidim in Poland. Yes, these people from the beginning had been, with the Jewish Communists and most of the Reform rabbis, among the nastiest, most resolute adversaries Zionism faced, both in Eastern Europe and in the land of Israel.

If Aguda's official motives for dealing with him were pragmatic, so were BG's for dealing with it, and above all for granting its yeshiva students exemptions from his beloved Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Truculent visionary that he was, he was also, until he grew very old, a skilled politician, and he said he wished to avoid unnecessary wars among Jews at a time when the Jewish state was very young and had a lot on its plate. He hated the proportional system of electing the Knesset,

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repeatedly trying and failing to reform it. But if coalitions had to be made, he argued, it was better to make them with rabbis to the Right of him than with the Stalinists to the Left or with that man Begin. This was BG's oft-repeated reason for agreeing to the so-called "status quo" in religious matters.

But the question which poses itself and which it is impossible to answer is whether BG was absolutely immune to sentiment, whether his heart did not also move him a fraction. For something all too human happened forty years ago to some Zionists who had fled the embrace of the Eastern European Jewish hamlet, the *shtetl*, forty years before that. They let down their guard before the pathetic remnants of that world.

The Zionist founders in Palestine were flinty, they burned with a gemlike flame, they were extremists or they were nothing. There were more than a few good haters among them, maybe because, like it or not, more than a few had impeccable hasidic pedigrees. Yet one way or the other, such heroic types could never get the murdered world of the *shtetl* quite out of their reflexes and their reveries. It was the world, after all, of their grandfathers and grandmothers, and of their own childhoods, and as much as it had stifled and sickened them, causing them as young men and women to take off for Palestine, now that they were young no longer, and now that that world had been destroyed, some (like BG's comrade, Zalman Shazar, who was to be Israel's third President and who now revealed sympathies with the Habad movement of the Lubavitcher Hasidim) were sufficiently human to relent. What harm could the black-coated, white-bearded folk do now? They were leftovers, remnants. More conclusively and horribly than any Zionist dreamed, history had shown the rabbis' way to be wrong and Zionism's right.

Of course, Ben-Gurion was no closet Hasid. If he was really nostalgic for anything, it was for the days of Joshua, King David, and Isaiah, not the muddy lanes of Plonsk. His obsession was to recreate the Jewish state in the land of Israel. To this end, he would have to galvanize, coax, and bully the Jews. For such a singleminded brute, he displayed, depending on how you look at it, great flexibility, cunning, or opportunism. Although he could treat the seventeen centuries between Bar Kochba's revolt against Rome and the first Zionist congress as so much lost time, he could also write, in a letter to Mizrahi members of the Knesset in 1950, "Even for a freethinking Jew like myself, our faith is still something that commands respect, and any Jew who does not revere Judaism in one way or another is alien to Jewish history."

From another politician, this could be written off as pure unctuousness. With BG, it must have been in some measure at least sincere. Whatever he sometimes said, he seems to have known that the culture of those seventeen centuries also constituted a portion of the new state's inheritance which it would be foolhardy to try to renounce. The negator of the Diaspora was not above quoting nuggets from the Talmud himself, for example the platitude that "the Jews are sometimes like the stars, and sometimes like dirt." Meanwhile, there were professors at the Hebrew University in those early years of Israel, superb scholars, excellent Zionists, winners of government grants and prizes, who devoted their lives to studying aspects of Judaism—Gershom Scholem, tracing the continuity between some of its myths and some of Zionism's, was only the most illustrious of these unbelieving intellectuals. They, however, only looked deeply into this cultural baggage and inheritance. They did not live it. So long as everyone else had his mind on the future, and on the Bible, no harm would be done if BG acceded and allowed several hundred "ultra-Orthodox" boys to be excused from the IDF in order to sit and hit the holy books day and night.

## III

Hebrew knows nothing of the "ultra-Orthodox." Instead, Israelis usually refer to them by their own name for themselves—*haredim*. A passable translation would be "fundamentalists." A better one would be "Zealots for the Law," the Law being, of course, not the law of the Zionist land, a hodgepodge of Anglo-Saxon, Ottoman, and Napoleonic legislation interpreted in the highest instance by the Israeli Supreme Court, but the Halakhah, the commandments and rules handed down in the desert, elaborated in the Talmud, and codified most recently by Joseph Caro in the 16th century.

The original *haredim* were Ashkenazi (of European origin). Now there are *haredim* of the Sephardi (Asian- and African-origin) variety also. The costume of the Ashkenazi *haredim* is more or less that of the Polish nobility of the 17th century. They are also known, less than affectionately, as *shechorim* ("blacks") and *dossim* ("religious"), the latter epithet being the Ashkenazi pronunciation of *dati'im* (see below). The demographers say that the fruitful *haredim* by now make up about 10 percent of the Jewish population of Israel. They predict that the percentage will continue rising.

Next come the *dati'im*. They are another 10 percent and correspond roughly to what are known in the Diaspora as the Orthodox, for example the faculty of Yeshiva University in New York. In principle, and sometimes practice, the *dati'im* bear the yoke of Halakhah as conscientiously as any *hared*, observing the same 613 commandments. They are, however, Zionists, maybe the most fervent Zionists going today, being the current generation of those observant Jews who worked hand in glove with Ben-Gurion.

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Theirs is a brand of Zionism, let it immediately be added, that repudiates normality for the Jews. They wear the knitted skullcap, serve in the IDF, reside outside the self-imposed ghettos, and study not only holy but workaday subjects. The *dati'im*, like the *haredim* when you get to know them, are not so homogeneous as they may at first seem. They range from the mild-mannered doves in the new Meimad ("Religious Center") party which did not quite make it into the Knesset, to the gun-toting, messiah-intoxicated settlers whom the foreign press, not to mention our local journalists, loves to hate.

Yet on the whole it is true that the *dati'im* have been, in the colloquial Hebrew, "going black." This does not mean that they have been putting on gabardine—though there are stories of some leaving the pro-Zionist yeshivas to join the *haredim*. It means that a certain mind-set has been making inroads into the younger *dati* generation. This mind-set signals itself in costume—luxuriant beards, larger skullcaps. It cherishes very particular, very ancient ideas about the world, about reality, about the Gentiles, and about Jews who have shrugged off the yoke.

If the older generation of *dati'im*, graduates of German universities, appreciated Goethe, their *sabra* (Israeli-born) grandsons have not heard of him, and tend to think that the outside world possesses nothing of value. In this they resemble more the *haredim* than the professors at Yeshiva University. A Gentile is an anti-Semite. A Jew who thinks otherwise is, at best, pitiful. The Law of Return needs to be corrected. And the United States—like Babylon, Athens, and Rome of vivid memory—is the great cultural enemy, the well-spring of every contemporary abomination from pornography to democracy, from intermarriage to rock. "*Dizengoff*" is the pejorative of these devoted young Israelis for their countrymen who have nothing else to do with their lives than ape America.

The reference is to Tel Aviv's main drag. Dizengoff Street on Friday nights jumps until the wee hours with movement, light, cars, motorcycles, music, food, Arab waiters, Swedish au pairs. Couples neck, and pork, renamed *basar lavan* ("white meat"), is on the menu. The bookstores carry everything from Lao-tse to Tom Wolfe. The boutiques are chic, the side streets house Israel's best art galleries, the beach is three blocks distant. Do the crowds of young and old, conversing and shouting in Hebrew, Polish, English, and Russian, make up the country's "secular" population?

THERE is a word in Hebrew for secular—*hiloni*. If the *Kulturkampf* here worsens, it may become another term of abuse. In the meantime, it is relatively value-free. Our thousands of years of infighting have, in any case, provided a stockpile of many more stinging labels to stick on Jews who conduct themselves as they should not. *Kofrim* ("apostates") is a good one, *apikorsim* ("atheists") is also good, *smolanim* ("leftists") has become a standby. But secular? Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak HaCohen Kook, appointed by the British the first Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Palestine, and together with his rabbi son the inspiration of the skullcapped settlers, once said that there was simply no such thing as a secular Jew—in every Jew, no matter how far lapsed, a divine spark glimmers.

Be that as it may, the pollsters report that some 35 percent of Israelis today, most of them Ashkenazi, consider themselves secular Jews, whatever that is. Furthermore, decals proclaiming *Ani Hiloni Hared* have been popping up on windshields—a play on words meaning, "I'm a worried secularist." And the sublimest heretic in Jewish history has an annual conference on secular humanistic pluralism named after him, which convenes now in Jerusalem, now in Tel Aviv, now in Haifa.

These Spinoza symposia are paid for, like much else in Israel, by one of America's many Jewish millionaires. The events are organized by Yirmiyahu Yovel, professor of philosophy at the Hebrew University and a former talk-show host on Israel TV, who wants to see whether, on the battlefield of ideas, a secular, humanistic, pluralistic brand of Zionism cannot still vie with religious fundamentalism. The way Yovel, who spends his vacations riding horses in France, understands and promotes it, the modern faith takes man as the measure and leaves him to be guided by reason. Having been (in this reading) probably the first Jew to suffer anathema for being reasonable, Spinoza makes an appropriate patron saint for these high-powered get-togethers.

The audiences are much the same as at Peace Now rallies—bareheaded Ashkenazim with university degrees, usually in the humanities or one of the "caring" professions. The speakers are Israelis like the novelist A.B. Yehoshua, the publisher Gershom Schocken, the playwright Yehoshua Sobol. Also present are guests from the melting pot, such as Saul Bellow and Michael Walzer. The American Jews give their talks in English. The locals speak Hebrew—a juicy, sinewy, refined, allusive, intense Hebrew. These conventions, which manage to fill no more than a medium-size lecture hall, offer some proof of the reserves of energy, stamina, and loyalty of an Israeli subgroup which these days usually seems simply demoralized and alienated.

Israel is the land of seminars. Unlike some, the Spinoza is more than a festival for the converted. True to his professed principles, Yovel brings on the sharpest objectors and skeptics to pose the hardest questions they can. It goes without saying that no *hared* would be caught dead at such a gathering. No *hared*, however, could pose harder questions to the secularist faithful than their unlikely idol, the eighty-six-year-old scientist Profes-

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sor Yeshayahu Leibowitz. And even when the skullcapped Leibowitz is not on the rostrum, the devil's advocates and the opposition are expected to go all-out.

Shmuel Schnitzer, bareheaded columnist of the daily *Ma'ariv*, demands to know of panelists and audience exactly what the secularism of Jews is supposed to be. He can understand what it negates, what it is not, but for the life of him he cannot imagine what it has to offer, what its positive content is, how it is different from secularism plain and simple. He hopes to be enlightened. What are its norms of behavior, private and public? How can a state calling itself Jewish be run according to it? The organizers say they are Zionists. That's good. But can Jewish nationalism be divorced from religion? Can a secular Jewish faith reproduce itself over the generations? And anyway, is pluralism good for the Jews? Has it really been all that good for them in America?

Schnitzer's challenge is taken up by Yovel and others, who give answers as plausible as they are familiar. A secular Judaism, it is said, is one which retains and fosters the values of Judaism, or at least some of them, but without the regulations and mystifications—it holds on to the baby, as it were, while throwing out the bathwater. Such an approach, the secularists go on, is particularly valid, and possible, when a Jew is at home in his own country and not in Exile. If it be objected that this is no longer Judaism, well, history shows that Judaism is what Jews make of it—including a Jew like Baruch Spinoza. In any event, practically speaking, an Israel run the other way, according to Halakhah, would first turn off most of the Jews in the world, and then tear itself apart with wars among the rabbis. Schnitzer listens, one eyebrow raised.

To all these old, brightly burning questions are added the new ones. Professor Eliezer Schweid, a *dati* versed in secular subjects, asks without sneering why the supposedly secular Zionism of Ahad Ha'am and Bialik and A.D. Gordon, not to mention Herzl, on which the audience has been weaned, has fallen to its present estate. Why is there a younger generation of Israelis which, knowing nothing and believing in less, is a prey to fundamentalism? Is it maybe the secularists' own fault? Is there something missing from their program, some knowledge or emotion which, if not the rootless Herzl, then Ahad Ha'am, Bialik, and Gordon themselves, who were steeped in rabbinical Judaism before they reacted against it, never lacked?

## IV

SPINOZA argues that the best thing is to love God, though God could not care less. This is icy stuff. Discussions on Spinoza are not about to become a mass phenomenon in the Jewish state. Yet some of the anxieties of the *hiloni* Ph.D.'s are shared by the man in the street. This is thanks to the fact that the Friday-night crowd on Dizengoff is almost as variegated as Israel itself. In it you find not only *hilonim*, not only Ashkenazim who vote for Labor, Shinui ("Change"), the Citizens Rights Movement, Mapam, and parties farther to the Left, but both Sephardim and Ashkenazim who vote for the Likud and factions farther to the Right. Desecrating the Sabbath, they motor into the heart of the urban sprawl to unwind, and if queried, many would hotly deny that they are secular, describing themselves rather as traditional—something known as *masorti*.

This is a category to which the surveys say the largest number of Israeli Jews belong, something like 45 percent. The *masorti* category, mainly though not exclusively Sephardi, implies a multitude of contradictory habits. The Israeli who regards himself as such may, for example, walk to the synagogue on the morning of the seventh day, and then drive to a soccer game in the afternoon to yell himself hoarse. He's eclectic. This Jew, no fan of the Left, has lately been coming to realize that if the *dati'im* and *haredim*, whom he continues to respect much more than he does the *hilonim*, get their way, he will be deprived of his soccer match on the day of rest, and maybe all days—sports and circuses have no place in a Jewish theocracy.

The amorphous, intermittently aroused Center in Israel also counts these people. The issues on which they may be mobilized have to be close to home—the Law of Return, "Who is a Jew," the legitimacy of Reform and Conservative rabbis, and other such problems, are far too remote. In Jerusalem, for example, the pure-Ashkenazi Citizens Rights Movement and the Vienna-born Mayor Teddy Kollek, recently reelected, were able to make common cause with the city's soccer fans, Likudniks and Sephardim almost to a man, to petition the Supreme Court and get a decent sports stadium built. The project had been held up for fifteen years by the *haredi* parties.

Other issues may crop up. One is the exemption of *haredi* young men from the army—the 400 yeshiva students excused by BG in his germinal deal with Aguda have multiplied to 20,000. The *hiloni* is more apt than the *masorti* to consider this a national disgrace. Respectful of something known as tradition, mindful of its many uses, the *masorti* allows that they also serve who only sit and learn the Talmud. Yet how many need do this? The knowledge that more than a division of able-bodied youngsters are let off, while their age-mates do three years' duty, followed by thirty boring and dangerous years in the reserves, scrapes a nerve.

The *haredim* boast that there are more yeshiva students in Israel today than there ever were in Eastern Europe. If true, this is indeed a startling comeback, one of history's most curious wrinkles.

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But hitting the books nonstop is not really in the nature of so many young men, especially not in a country with so much sunshine and non-talmudic excitements. So you have black-coated commandos who spend their Sabbaths throwing rocks at cars, and now there is a gang (Keshet, "the Non-Compromisers") that has been planting bombs at newsstands selling secular newspapers in *haredi* neighborhoods. Keshet has also daubed swastikas on Ben-Gurion's grave. The cops who have to put in overtime when the scholars are throwing stones, and who without fail are called "Nazis" by them, are *masorti* Sephardim, and they don't like it.

Without drawing extravagant conclusions from the fact, it may be mentioned that the biggest protest demonstration of recent years, held in Tel Aviv while the politicians and rabbis were huddling last winter, was over the "draft-dodging" of the *haredim*. It was attended by the usual suspects, but not only by them. Among the retired generals addressing the outdoor meeting was Rafael ("Raful") Eitan, a former chief of staff of the IDF and now head of the far-Right Tsomet ("Crossroads") party. Raful, dressed in a jogging suit, drew cheers when he said that everyone without exception should have to do some kind of military service.

THE anxiety and resentment of the *hilonim* and not a few of the *masortim* are usually tempered by the fatalism and irony without which life in Israel is simply too risky. As the government-making talks dragged on last fall, however, the *haredim* upping the ante and Shamir and Peres taking turns promising them the sky, you could have cut the ill-feeling with a knife. The country's favorite comedy-and-satire team, *Hagashash Hahiver* ("The Pale Tracker"), did a skit on Friday-night TV portraying imaginary, black-coated morals police on the beach. It was a sketch in acid, not in the least good-humored, and in Tel Aviv they ate it up. Meanwhile, in real life, at a Jerusalem bus stop, a woman ranted to no one in particular, "For this we came to this country? For this we sacrificed? To turn it all over to the *dossim*? Who would have thought?" On and on she went, and no one in her captive audience spoke up, except a bareheaded gent who finally protested, "Is that any way to talk?"

"Well," she said, "aren't I right?"

"Maybe you are. But why this hatred?"

*Sin'a*—hatred. In context, this is short for *sin'at hinam*, itself a code term. A sociologist with a smattering of Hebrew and a little experience of Israel might render *sin'at hinam* as "free-floating hostility." But that sociologist would be wrong. *Sin'at hinam*, as all Israeli schoolchildren no matter what kind of school they go to can tell you, signifies the sharply focused, essentially baseless hatred of Jews for their fellow Jews, which seems endemic among us and which reached its most destructive pitch so far only twenty centuries ago.

The old-time sages of Judaism said that it was as divine punishment for *sin'at hinam* that the Second Temple was burned and we were cast into Exile. That emotion was the sin of sins. The explanation has been taught for years in all Israeli schools, including the secular ones where, since the late 1950's, there have been compulsory courses in what BG and his Education Minister, Zalman Aranne, called "Jewish Consciousness." It remains to be seen how effectively the cautionary tale of *sin'at hinam* has been internalized. What is for sure is that, as a code term, it is universally recognized, even by people who have never read the ancient historian Josephus and do not know the saying, attributed to the late president of Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser, "Give them time, brothers, and they'll devour themselves."

The reverse side of our patented genius for survival, in other words, has always been our genius for going overboard, for taking an idea too far, for self-mutilation. The word for it is extremism. It starts with either an idea or an emotion, proceeds to action—prohibitions, bans, excommunications—and in biblical days and later it debouched in such bloodshed as to give the nations pause. Maybe Nasser, no great reader, was told that the savagery of the civil war which we Jews conducted among ourselves in besieged Jerusalem shocked the Romans. The memory of that epochal, self-inflicted catastrophe is alive today among Israeli Jews, as is the vague inkling or clear perception that we carry something in our genes more dangerous to ourselves than to our enemies.

The sovereign remedy for, the best prophylaxis against, *sin'at hinam* is supposed to be *ahavat Yisrael*—the loving, forgiving concern of Jews for all other Jews. This too appears in the Israeli curriculum. It is, however, a concept loaded with religious overtones, so in secular schools, as part of the Jewish-values classes, it is transmuted into *ahdut ha'am*—national unity. Either way, these are grand concepts, easy cover for hypocrisy. Much more modest is the simple sense of self-preservation—preserve us from ourselves! It operated last year, not without agonies of suspense, and not without help from those American Jewish firemen, to head off a government beholden to the "rabbis." That was the Center in Israel holding. But Jewish history is too rich in other precedents to be confident about the next time, especially when pockets of extremism in one form or another are to be found across the gamut.

The same Professor Leibowitz who informs the *hilonim* that their "humanism" is nothing more than egotism, and who used to upbraid the chief rabbis for being BG's "kept women," dismisses *ahdut ha'am* as a "sacred cow."

Learned, polyglot, wrathful, comfortless, Leibowitz appeals greatly to the somewhat masochistic Peace Now-ers and the alienated *hilonim*. Is it in

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part due to the fact that he is a commandment-keeper? Mincing words is not his style—for him, any Jew who does not bear the yoke of the Law is derelict. Certainly the violence of the professor's language is winning for most of his strange fans. Take, for example, his comment on the perennial idea of changing the Law of Return so that only Jews converted by Orthodox rabbis would be kosher:

> Any conversion to Judaism which is not done for its own sake is worthless, no matter who officiates, whether a rabbi who is called Orthodox and gets his salary from the government, or a "Conservative" or "Reform" rabbi who has thrown off the yoke and believes himself to be religious! The very few genuine conversions need no governmental seal of approval, while the production line of casual converts is a moral and religious outrage, a mockery of Judaism!

His audience knows to what he refers—the black American basketballers who have been "converted" by the chief rabbinate so that Maccabi Tel Aviv can field a team of international stature. To hear the religious establishment exposed is especially satisfying to these *hilonim* when it is done by a man who is himself an observant Jew.

Yet as thrilling as they find his words, few of Leibowitz's admirers have changed their lives in accordance with them. Few have resumed the yoke which their grandparents or great-grandparents laid down. Few have heeded the professor's calls to refuse service as reserve soldiers in the occupied territories and to go to jail instead. Cowardice? Or a sense of loyalty, after all, on the part of the Peace Now-ers to the country which so many of them have half-despaired of, and which they fear may have an even slimmer chance if Leibowitz's extremist remedies are actually applied? For the truest and most dangerous split in Israel is not between Right and Left, or observant and lapsed, but between those who are itching for a showdown and those who could live without it. The so-called "status-quo" rule is the expedient of those who think the better part of valor is to put off any showdowns among Jews.

## V

"STATUS QUO" being one of those Gentile notions for which there can be no good Hebrew translation, it has been taken over into Israeli usage as is. Today it refers to the arrangement made between Ben-Gurion and Aguda in 1947.

In the summer of that year the British announced that they had had enough and the UN sent a commission to Palestine in advance of recommending how to solve the problem between the Arabs and the Jews. There would be the usual hearings. Ben-Gurion, head of the Jewish Agency, understood the importance of these hearings to the goal of partition and a Jewish state. It would not do if Agudat Yisrael demurred or demonstratively stayed away. He therefore wrote a letter to the Aguda's Rabbi Levin, signed also by a Mizrahi politician and a non-socialist Zionist politician, which declared that although "it is not [our] intention to establish a theocracy," the coming state would leave authority over the marriages and divorces of all Jews to rabbinical courts, the Jewish Sabbath would be the official day of rest, *kashrut* would hold in state institutions, and separate "streams" of education emphasizing Judaism for those who wanted it would be paid for by the government.

This letter, along with the emotions of that period which seem to have swayed even many Jews who had never been enthusiastic about Zionism, was enough to persuade Aguda not to strike any discordant notes at the UN hearings. In fact, as has been mentioned, Rabbi Levin the following year signed the Declaration of Independence, a document hard if not impossible to square with Aguda's view of Halakhah, vowing as it does to accord freedom of conscience and religion to all citizens of the miraculous new state and equal civil rights to everyone regardless of religion, sex, race, or national origin.

The 1947 letter did not contain the magic words status quo—it would be twelve years before they made an appearance in any official paper. But the apparent agreement thus framed was popularly known as the status quo from the start.

The feelings of the period notwithstanding, however, both the signatories to and the recipient of that landmark letter probably suspected that, once the British departed and the Jews, for the first time in a hundred generations, were on their own, things would not remain nicely frozen. Or maybe, caught up in events, they only understood it implicitly, and it took the half-blind Chaim Weizmann (soon to become the first President of Israel), writing on a mountaintop in Switzerland in 1948, to see clearly what was coming, status quo or no status quo:

> I have never feared really religious people. The genuine type has never been politically aggressive; on the contrary, he seeks no power, he is modest and retiring—and modesty was the great feature in the lives of our saintly rabbis and sages in olden times. It is the new, secularized type of rabbi, resembling somewhat a member of a clerical party in Germany, France, or Belgium, who is the menace, and who will make a heavy bid for power by parading his religious convictions. It is useless to point out to such people that they transgress a fundamental principle which has been laid down by our sages: "Thou shalt not make of the Torah a crown to glory in, or a spade to dig with." There will be a great struggle. I foresee something which will perhaps be reminiscent of the *Kulturkampf* in Germany, but we must be firm if we are to survive; we must have a clear line of demarca-

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tion between legitimate religious aspirations and the duty of the state toward preserving such aspirations, on the one hand, and on the other hand the lust for power which is sometimes exhibited by pseudo-religious groups.

IN FACT, almost as soon as the invading Arab armies were beaten back in 1948-49, we started fighting among ourselves over the application of the status quo. *Shabbat* was the official day of rest—but what if, in Haifa, all through the Mandate period, vehicles operated by the Jewish bus cooperative had served the people who wanted to go to the beach on their day off? Would they now have to walk? *Kashrut* on army bases, of course—but could kibbutzim breed pigs? And how about autopsies? Or mixed bathing at a new swimming pool in Jerusalem? It was hard to say.

There were *haredi* stonethrowing and arson, *hiloni* counterprovocations, the riot squad was called in, Jews were teargassed and clubbed by other Jews. The status quo in practice was anything but. It was, at best, a kind of modest social contract whereby the cultural-religious wars would be waged incrementally and not too viciously. At worst, it was a fiction. For the socialist Zionists who had made the new state had one vision of the true, the good, and the beautiful, the various observant Jews had another, and if the former, led none too tamely by BG, were prepared to accommodate, the latter, even in the chummy Mizrahi-NRP, could never take their eyes off the final goal—namely, a state ruled by Halakhah—without betraying themselves.

"Both our people, as a whole, and our religion, in specific, are totally different from all others," Rabbi Meir Berlin, later Bar-Ilan, head of Mizrahi, had written in 1922. "When we have a state, should anyone try to separate church and state, this will represent not a separation but a contradiction." So although it was sometimes fudged, the bottom line with the NRP was really the same as with the *haredim*: an acceptable, grown-up Jewish polity could only be, not one of laws and customs borrowed from here and there, but of the Law. The difference, and not a small one, was that in the coming Jewish state Mizrahi thought to bring the Jews, too many of whom had recently been impressed by Locke, Madison, and Marx, around by example and education, not coercion. "We must modify them gradually," wrote Berlin, "not by passing laws but by educating the young."

The hottest issue therefore was not swimming pools. It was the hearts and minds of the Israeli young. Who would teach what to the orphans of the extermination, and to the children of the African and Asian refugees? BG understood as well as anyone that on this issue hinged the character and future of the country. On this he would not budge—if the state was going to pay for the schools, it must have at least some supervision over them, and even the kids learning in the Judaism-stream must be inculcated with Zionism. At that, Rabbi Levin quit the government, and in 1952 Aguda set up its own educational system. It would be twenty-nine years before the *haredim* sat around the cabinet table again.

So in the revised status quo, there were three streams laving the minds of the first generation of Israelis—socialist, General Zionist, and *dati*. The largest number of pupils, reflecting the political dominance and cultural ascendancy of the country's founders, went to the so-called socialist schools. There, when they were not hiking the length and breadth of the land, they were belabored with the ideals which had driven the older generation, plus "Jewish Consciousness," plus BG's *mamlakhtiut*—"statism."

AS LONG AS the founders remained top dogs culturally and politically, it was the kids in the more and more archaically-named socialist stream who could consider themselves the heirs to power. Indeed, while cultural-religious skirmishes could disturb the peace, even bring down governments, they were basically a sideshow until a certain historical dialectic caught up with the world, with Israel, and with Jews everywhere. The status quo in the meantime worked not well, but well enough.

While it did, BG could try to concentrate on the task of making a New Jew. This does not mean that he was not continually required to justify his God-and-Caesar arrangement with Aguda, and especially with the NRP. His motives for giving them such a healthy slice of the pie were, he said again and again to his critics, both pragmatic and broadly historical. If he met the observant halfway, if he gave them their budgets and ritual baths, their schools and chief rabbinate, they would give him a free hand in other, more important matters, such as accepting reparations from the Germans and aligning with the U.S. The way to domesticate the rabbis, he sometimes hinted, was not to shut them out but to bring them in—to coopt them, as we say today. And to those of his party comrades and socialist-Zionist rivals who were pressing for a constitution and unmistakable separation of synagogue and state, BG replied that they were being irresponsible and ignorant at one and the same time.

Irresponsible, because if it was made crystal clear that the infant Jewish state must grow up godless, this would plunge it into a *Kulturkampf* at the worst possible moment. Ignorant of Jewish history, because, like it or not, with the Jews it was neither easy "to separate the national from the religious aspect," nor, contrary to what Weizmann seemed to have prescribed, was it advisable to try, certainly not right away. First things first—gather in the survivors and the refugees, make New Jews of their children, green the Negev, summon a couple of million American Jews from

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their fleshpots, and then worry about writing a constitution. BG had his way on this, thanks as much to the outlook of his countrymen at that time as to his terrifying singlemindedness.

Note that in his Swiss prophecy, Weizmann, a man of the world, did not really come out for a James Madison-type separation of church and state. "We must have," he wrote ambiguously, "a clear line of demarcation between legitimate religious aspirations and the duty of the state toward preserving such aspirations, on the one hand, and on the other hand the lust for power which is sometimes exhibited by pseudo-religious groups."

Where exactly should that line be threaded? Should the "duty of the state" simply consist in seeing to it that everyone can worship, or not worship, as he pleases? Or should the state establish an official religion, like the Church of England? Weizmann did not specify. He was intelligent enough to refrain, however, from recommending an American model for Israel. Nor did he stipulate which "religious aspirations" were legitimate, and which illegitimate, other than making a maybe not completely frank distinction between spiritual prestige and political power.

It is not even clear which group of rabbis Weizmann was warning against. Maybe the "new, secularized type" of clerics he had in mind were in the mold of his nemesis, the American Reform rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, orator and Zionist leader. Possibly Weizmann meant the politicos of Mizrahi. Or did he, in 1948, actually foresee that one day the types who had rapped him over the knuckles when he was a schoolboy in a White Russian hole would claim the balance of power in the reborn Jewish state?

For that is how things have regressed or evolved. From being a sideshow on the political scene, the religious anti-Zionists have come to be in a position where, unless there is an electoral reform to curb them, they will continue to be able to prevent either of the country's two main parties from forming a normal government.

What happened?

## VI

Measured as a proportion of the entire popular vote of Jews and Arabs, or in terms of Knesset seats, the gain for the religious parties as a whole, Zionist and anti-Zionist, has not been tremendous. If in 1949 they got 12.19 percent of the vote and 16 seats, last year they got 15.34 percent and 18 seats. Even this is no record, for as long ago as 1961, the grand total for the religious camp was 15.43 percent and 18 seats. The true story emerges only from a comparison of the subtotals.

While in 1951 the easygoing NRP took 10 out of 15 seats, and in 1961 no fewer than 12 out of 18, by last year the ratio was reversed, and the various *haredi* parties captured 13 of these 18.

This is a minor revolution. Yet the consequences of it would not have convulsed Israel and Jewry a few months ago, and would not be threatening to do it again after the next elections, if two other things had not also happened in the last couple of decades.

First, the two biggest parties in the land have shrunk in prestige and popularity. Neither the Likud nor the Labor party can win more than a third of the seats in the Knesset for itself. Second, at their expense the grab-bag of little parties—religious and secular, Jewish and Arab, Zionist, anti-Zionist, and non-Zionist, responsible and mad—have proliferated. Their combined strength in the present Knesset exceeds that of either the Likud or Labor alone.

Demographics are sometimes adduced to account for these developments. It is pointed out that, over the last generation or two, observant Israelis, and those who originated in Asia and Africa and are loosely known as Sephardim, have been having more children, and have been less liable to leave for New York or Los Angeles, than others of their countrymen. These statistics may be accurate, but they are not very enlightening. It does not necessarily follow from the birthrate and emigration figures that the predominant ideals and myths of the country when it was young should have been superseded. And the increase of the skullcapped and dark-skinned hardly makes it clear why the main right-wing party, Likud, has become quite as weak as Labor.

A better analysis would be broadly dialectical, fully conscious that politics is but the crude reflection of cultural shifts. The operative Zionist visions of the grandparents—whether humanist, socialist, or nationalist—have not been passed on to very many of the grandchildren. This should not be surprising, seeing that the visions were revolutionary and the revolution took place. Nor is Israel altogether unique in this. The failure of the Left especially to renew itself here is comparable to its failure elsewhere in the West. The kibbutzim are bankrupt, figuratively as well as literally, and left-wingers in the cities are recognizable by their snobbishness, despair, prosperity, nostalgia, and masochism.

Yet it is not only the social-democratic dream, the official dream thirty years ago, which has run out of steam. The Old Right, for more than a generation synonymous with Menachem Begin, is also in decline. It has steadily been losing votes since his retirement, on the one hand to nationalists who make him look like the soul of moderation, on the other hand to rabbi-worshippers. No longer do portraits of Ben-Gurion, Moshe Dayan, and Begin decorate felafel stands. They have been replaced by the Lubavitcher *rebbe*, the Baba Sali (the late Sephardi Rabbi Yisrael Abuhatzeira), and (yes) Rambo. It is as if a centrifugal force were shattering BG's New Jew into a thousand old pieces.

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The most spectacular product of this force at work has been Shas ("Sephardi Torah Guardians"). This new *haredi* party, on the face of it, is only another team in a league where the prizes are jobs, money, and chauffeured Volvos. Shas, supported mainly by Jews of Moroccan extraction, is the first ethnic party in Israel to make a place for itself on the political map. It, or rather the conditions which brought it about, would sadden BG. To watch its young cadres working the phones is to recall that for years the Labor party patronized the Moroccans, and even in Begin's Herut (later the Likud), they supplied the troops, while the Ashkenazim, to this day, remain the generals.

Yet the power game is not all. It is not even the essence. The rise of Shas reflects the genesis of a xenophobic religiosity among some Sephardim. None other than Shas's top man in the Knesset, Rabbi Yitzhak Peretz, a former professional soccer player, explained that the reason a train struck a school bus at a crossing, killing many children, was that there is too much desecration of the Sabbath in Israel.

In any case, the prestige and authority of the original Zionist culture, of the founders, has been eclipsed. The Six-Day War, when euphoria succeeded dread, the Yom Kippur War, when dread succeeded complacency, and the war in Lebanon, when the IDF found itself in Beirut without knowing why, accelerated the process. The politicians and generals found popular trust being withdrawn from them and reinvested, if anywhere, in rabbis. The two main parties faltered. By 1981, for the first time, Aguda had the balance of power. It used it to enter Begin's coalition, at the price of getting money for its schools without supervision, a manifest violation of the status quo.

Seven years later, the three *haredi* parties individually and collectively broke through. Each of them, in the wake of last year's election deadlock, was in a position to dictate, to make or break a Likud or Labor government. It went to their heads. At one point or another they demanded, and seemed to be promised, the Ministries of the Interior, Religious Affairs, Welfare, Housing, and Immigrant Absorption, the chairmanship of the Knesset Finance Committee, stiffer Sabbath laws, stewardship of the national lottery, and, to break the camel's back, that change in the Law of Return, popularly known as "Who is a Jew."

## VII

The first law enacted by the first Knesset was the Law of Return in 1950, affirming the right of any Jew to enter Israel and become a citizen. But who is a Jew? The provisional government of the state had answered the question rather liberally two years before: a Jew is someone who says he is a Jew. Such a definition, fine for freethinking Jews right after Hitler, was unacceptable to others, descent in Halakhah being matrilinear. But it was eight years before the NRP bolted the government over the problem. This occurred when the Minister of the Interior, a member of one of the socialist Zionist parties, consented to register as Jewish the child of a marriage in which only the father was a Jew.

Governing without the NRP was inconvenient for BG. After two years, having canvassed rabbis and others worldwide, he gave in. He sent a letter to the NRP which included these words: "The government will maintain the status quo . . . in regard to matters of religion." He also replaced the Interior Minister with an NRP man, who promptly went beyond the letter and issued a directive whereby registrations of Jews would be in accordance with Halakhah. "A Jew," the directive to clerks read, "means a person born of a Jewish mother or who has been converted to Judaism." However, the Supreme Court struck this down. The justices said that Halakhah was not legally binding and that the Interior Minister had exceeded his authority. If the government wished to redefine what a Jew was, it would have to pass a law in the Knesset.

This was done, not without the most earnest debate and Byzantine logrolling, ten years later, in 1970 during Golda Meir's term as premier. The NRP seemed satisfied. Aguda was not. It demanded that as for conversions, only those carried out "in accordance with Halakhah" be honored. Year in, year out, it presented bills to that effect, which were not passed.

By the late 1970's, the NRP and Menachem Begin's Likud were backing the additional wording, each for its own reasons. Or rather, the NRP was doing it fairly sincerely, the Likud less so. The NRP's face was changing with a change of generations—it was growing a beard and getting a faraway look in its eye. The Likud, having become the country's leading party, had coalition arithmetic to worry about. By promising Aguda that he would do what he could for the amendment, Begin in 1977 got the *haredim* to support his coalition tacitly, and in 1981 actually brought them into the government. Whenever the Aguda and the new NRP tried to convert these promises into action, however, they were disappointed. Begin, an old-time liberal, refrained from imposing discipline, letting his people vote their consciences. The votes were close, but in the event the Knesset, including Arab and Communist legislators, always rejected the change.

The *haredi* and *dati* draft amendments continued to be routinely, persistently, religiously tabled after Begin's retirement. Less was at stake politically after a national-unity government was made in 1984, since, when the Likud and Labor are forced to combine, the smaller parties are cut down to size. But there were still mini-crises arising from this issue or pseudo-issue. In 1986, for example, Shas's Peretz quit the Interior Min-

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istry after being obliged by the Supreme Court to register as a Jew an American immigrant, Shoshanna Miller, who had been converted by a Reform rabbi. Shas returned to the ministry only after Shamir, now premier, promised yet again that the Likud would do better. Soon after, Miller returned to Colorado, and the *haredi* parties, in the most recent Knesset elections, scored their breakthough.

At one point or another in the parleying last November and December, both Shamir and Peres promised Aguda that if it went into a narrow government with the Likud, or with Labor, it would finally get its way with Who is a Jew. The promise was only one of a pile of inducements offered to and extorted by the little parties. The pledges this time were in writing, not verbal. Probably neither Shamir nor Peres meant to honor them, yet circumstances made such solemn lies vital. If they disgusted some Israelis, they seem to have mortified most of the Jews in the rest of the world.

THE uproar abroad took our bareheaded politicians by surprise. Who would have thought that American Jews, so comfortably at home, would panic over a few words more or less in some Israeli law? This unexpected reaction, as things developed, was not unwelcome—Shamir and Peres turned it to advantage in their poker games with the *haredim* on the way to another national-unity government. But the surprise was as honest as anything can be with politicians. "Yes, I was surprised that so many [American Jews] took it as a personal matter," confessed Yossi Ben Aharon, director general of Shamir's office. "It just goes to show that there are things which we in Israel don't understand about them."

That is putting it diplomatically. The one thing all Israelis understand, and in varying degrees resent, is the fact that, as much as our American cousins may love this country, they will not move here, will not join us. The very few who do come to stay are invariably *dati'im* and *haredim*, not at all representative of Mr. & Mrs. Average American Jew. So although the travesty played out by our politicians and rabbis was dismaying, and worse, to more than a few of us, the real issue—who shall be an authentic rabbi for the Jews who remain in Exile—was remote. And there's the rub. So few Average American Jews and Average American Rabbis come to share our fate with us that even our most devoted *hilonim* would say that as far as rabbis are concerned, only what the foreign press calls the Orthodox are the genuine article. These Reform and Conservative padres, passing through with their correct political opinions, look and sound more like psychiatrists and college professors, and not very impressive or self-respecting psychiatrists and college professors at that.

The American Jewish envoys who came flying over to voice mass concern, grievance, and anger were soothingly reassured by our politicians and chief rabbis alike that the amendment did not mean much. It certainly did not mean that the non-Orthodox—something like 85 percent of American Jews—were bad or partial Jews. These "dialogues," probably not the last of their kind, always had a tragicomic, unspoken subtext.

What the bareheaded Israeli politicians were thinking but not saying was: "You people are basically spectators, not players. If you and your dubiously-converted spouses came here to live and vote, we wouldn't have to have these squalid dealings with the rabbis." Our establishment rabbis were thinking, but not saying: "You good, poor Jews are Jews, all right—but what about your grandchildren? Will a child who goes to 'temple' once in a while, and who is married in a ceremony presided over jointly by a 'rabbi' and a Catholic priest, be a Jew in any more serious sense than Woody Allen? We are seeking to delegitimize your 'rabbis' because only if real Judaism has a monopoly can the Jewish people survive." And the American Jews staying at the Hilton and the King David were thinking, but not saying: "We're not afraid that America's honeymoon with us may terminate, even though all such honeymoons have terminated in the past. America is different. And even if it does, we're not afraid that because of any Israeli law we or our children will be refused refuge. The thing is, America is killing us with kindness. Most of us, by now, are Jews only thanks to Israel. Take that away, even by implication, and what are we?"

As usual, self-interest and what Weizmann called "lust for power" are compounded with idealism. On the one hand, there is no doubt that some of the "Orthodox" rabbis are sincerely, altruistically worried about the future if Jews and Judaism continue being watered down. On the other hand, it helps to be cynical—what we have here, among other things, is the latest tussle between competing guilds. The guild of divines which enjoys a closed shop in Israel due to the refusal of Reform and Conservative Jews to immigrate wishes to roll back the changes of the last couple of centuries and extend its cartel worldwide. That is understandable, and is understood by a great many Israelis who know their rabbis.

The twist is that even if Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist rabbis were consigned to outer darkness and their congregants saved, it would only be the beginning, for as the situation in Israel shows, rabbis are a contentious bunch. Closed shop or no, impeccably non-Reform, non-Conservative, non-Reconstructionist rabbis here are constantly at each others' throats. The ex-Sephardi and ex-Ashkenazi chief rabbis are not on speaking terms. The judgments of the courts appointed by the *dati*-run chief rabbinate, and the certificates of its *kashrut* inspectors, cut no ice with the various *haredi* sects, each of which has

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its own legal and dietary apparatus. These sects, furthermore, are often at daggers drawn, a given which Shamir and Peres capitalized on. In short, once some rabbis start degrading others in the name of unity and by means of Israeli law, where will it end?

Cynical and idealistic, self-interested and patriotic, Shamir and Peres gave the rabbis a lesson in politics, Israeli-style. Freshman member of the Knesset Rabbi Shlomo Ravitz of the Degel Hatorah ("Flag of the Torah") party put it in a nutshell: "At the beginning, the religious parties tried to play the two big parties off against each other; at the end, both big parties played the religious parties off against themselves." This was possible, if far from easy, because the "religious" are not one camp but many.

Degel, for example, is a new party formed to advance the interests of the Litvak (originally Lithuanian) *mitnagdim* (anti-hasidic) camp of *haredim* as against those of the hasidic dynasties grouped in Aguda. In this sense the fight dates from the 18th century. Personal animus at the top, filtering down intensely to the troops, is a feature of these long-lasting struggles. Degel's mentor, the ninety-three-year-old Rabbi Eliezer Shach of Bnei Brak, is said not to be able to abide the eighty-seven-year-old Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, also known as the Lubavitcher *rebbe* of Brooklyn, who, by throwing the weight of his Habad Hasidim behind Aguda in the last elections, is believed to have doubled its representation in the Knesset. It is also Habad which has made a special crusade of Who is a Jew.

The ethnic factor, a ticklish one, enters in with Shas. As has been indicated, Shas is almost as much an expression of the Sephardi, especially the Moroccan, will-to-political-power as it is a religious phenomenon. No love is lost between Aguda and Shas, the latter holding the former guilty of condescension in the past and of dirty pool today.

Besides personalities and ethnicity, there is also the cash nexus. Each *haredi* party, and the subparties within it, have housing projects and schools to be financed, in large part out of Israeli government and ministerial budgets. The competition for these monies is ferocious, and the secular politicians, not to mention radio interviewers, make the most of it. One of the lowest, most revealing points of the government-making crisis was plumbed when Rabbi Ravitz and Aguda's Rabbi Moshe Feldman were brought together on a telephone hookup by Radio Israel to discuss the subject of public funding for their respective yeshivas, much of which hung on who made what deal with which of the two big *hiloni* parties. The gleeful anchorman did not have to egg these pious Jews on—the airwaves dripped with venom.

It was lucky for the Jewish state that if the *haredi* politicians finally realized that Shamir and Peres had led them on, they knew from the start that they could trust each other even less. Another national-unity government was formed, the Law of Return is being left alone, and a collective sigh of relief was heard from American Jews. It was premature, however.

The *haredi* parties may have second thoughts about trying to delegitimize Reform and Conservative Judaism through the Knesset. But there is more than one way to skin a cat. The Law of Return may be amended in practice, if not on the books, by steering every new immigrant not born Jewish to a rabbinical court for "friendly advice" before being registered. This is exactly what Shas, which slunk into the government after loudly protesting that both Shamir and Peres had broken solemn promises to its sages, and which holds the portfolios of the Interior and Immigration, is doing. The upshot is a clutch of pending cases in the Supreme Court, including that of an immigrant who was converted by an Orthodox rabbi abroad but objects to having to have her conversion validated by the local rabbis.

So the problem of Who is a Jew/Who is a rabbi remains with us. It has not been resolved, it has merely been moved to the back burner, where it will boil up again, either the next time a government has to be formed or when the time comes for making peace with the Palestinians. It is a matter, after all, of principle.

Principle and self-interest—the two great motives of politics. Humiliated as they might have felt by their treatment at the hands of the secular politicians, worried as some of them may be by the fallout on their flocks and on the name of Judaism from such sordid farces, the behind-the-scenes bosses of the *haredi* parties, the octogenarian and nonagenarian sages, have no choice. They cannot bid farewell to politics—Shas, Aguda, and Degel, without skipping a beat, contested the municipal elections up and down the country in February. If the vision of a good Jewish society alone did not compel the burgeoning *haredim*, demographics and economics would goad them on mercilessly from behind.

The *haredi* population pyramid is shaped like that of the Palestinians—small on top, very wide on the bottom. Sixty percent of the *haredim* in Israel are under twenty-five years of age. This is a tribute to their regenerative powers, their optimistic dutifulness, but it also bodes trouble. If the men spend their lives studying the sacred texts, while their wives alternate giving birth and holding down low-paying jobs, how will this community or communities keep everyone housed, fed, and clothed?

The poverty in parts of Mea Shearim and Bnei Brak, and in Safed, Ashdod, Netivot, and right in Tel Aviv, where the *haredim* are staking out new ground, is already as bad as in any Palestinian refugee camp—eight or ten people in two or three rooms is not unusual. Their flocks may count on

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heaven, but the *haredi* shepherds must think more practically. Nor can angels from abroad be expected to foot the bill for all the competing sects. These have no choice, therefore, but to supplement their separate begging drives abroad with a steady tap into the Israeli treasury. So the *haredi* imperative is not to drop out of the political game, but to play it united and with the coolest possible heads.

## VIII

Last year's spectacle, it is widely agreed, must not recur. Yet chances are it will. Not only was it undignified—it might have concluded much less happily, far more dangerously, than it did. The conventional secular wisdom says that the way to keep the tail from wagging the dog right over the brink next time is at long last to pass what Ben-Gurion always desired but could never get—an electoral reform. And indeed, the Likud-Labor coalition pact includes a commitment to study reform seriously. Will anything come of it?

There are grounds to be less than sanguine. First, and inevitably, there seem to be almost as many reform plans as there are Jews. Some, especially in the Likud, want direct election of the Prime Minister, as in France. Others, especially in Labor, are against this, arguing that it would open the door for some charismatic demagogue, and are plumping instead for a change of the parliamentary system from proportional to constituency representation, again as in France. Meanwhile, Uriel Reichmann of Tel Aviv University, the country's foremost expert on the subject, says a decent reform can only be three-pronged. It should adopt both of the above changes, plus something else Israel has never had—a bill of rights or constitution. Other people think the answer is to raise the minimum number of votes needed to win a Knesset seat.

All such talk distresses the small parties, both skullcapped and bareheaded. Aguda, not without reason, reckons it will be victimized by gerrymandering, while Yair Tsaban, head of the left-wing Mapam, maintains that the trouble is not in the system, it is in ourselves, in this society which in so many matters is divided against itself. He may be right. Nor can anyone, not even Professor Reichmann, be certain what the results of any reform would be. They might make this country even less governable.

Given the host of ideas, and the workings of the human and political mind as the memory of last year's crisis fades and new ones flare, the chances of reform before the next general elections should probably be put at less than fifty-fifty. It can fairly confidently be predicted that the *haredim* are again going to be in the thick of things.

The next test may come sooner than 1992. It may come in the not-too-distant future if Yasir Arafat is able to convince not only the people in Foggy Bottom and on West End Avenue but also a more substantial number here that he can deliver peace for territory. Then the apparent questions will be ones of geopolitics, of demilitarized zones, early-warning stations, security guarantees, and so on. But the deeper debate will be over the great intangibles—who are we, what are we doing here, what have we been striving, dying, killing for? What is the nature of the world and of reality? What do we want, what can we get, and what are we commanded by reason, conscience, or God to do? In other words, it will also be another act, maybe the climactic one, in the Cultural-Religious drama.

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# The Only Hope For Latin America

*Mark Falcoff*

As the 20th century nears its final decade, the forces which have shaped the entire postwar era appear at long last to be in definitive decline. At any rate, it seems virtually certain that in the coming years various regions and powers will play roles very different from the ones they have played for nearly half a century. The United States—somewhat recovered from Vietnam but apparently lacking the political will to continue as a great power—debates what role its resources will allow it to play. Within three years, the countries of the European community will open their borders to one another, creating what may well be the world's largest and most powerful economic unit. The imminent end of the cold war has been announced, and major trends in West German opinion suggest the revival of an idea at least as old as Bismarck, namely, that Germany's interests lie to the East, not the West. Japan, defeated and humiliated by the United States in 1945, now holds the key to New York's financial markets, and therefore the entire economic well-being of its erstwhile conqueror. Korea, once a ward of American charity, has become a major industrial power in its own right, expanding its hold on some of the most competitive (and lucrative) Western markets.

In the so-called Third World, the picture is radically different. There, at least to judge by reports in the press, the characteristic motifs are internecine conflict, social regression, and sharp economic decline. This is most dramatically evident in Latin America, whose real per-capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has declined by at least 1.5 percent since 1980. In every rubric used by international agencies or development organizations to measure well-being—consumer price levels, investment, exports, imports, or the proportion of external debt to exports—the region as a whole has moved backward, in some cases precipitously so. It is perhaps the only Westernized region of the world with good reason to fear the 21st century.

This is a fairly astounding development when one reflects upon the fact that these figures subsume not merely backward tropical republics like Honduras or Paraguay but sophisticated urban societies like Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, and Venezuela—nations which ranked in the second tier of powers after World War II; which registered fairly respectable rates of growth for the first six or seven decades of the 20th century; and which still produce large numbers of talented and energetic scientists, engineers, physicians, technocrats, intellectuals, and skilled workers, many of whom have quit their places of origin for Western Europe or the United States, or are in the process of doing so.

The loss of international status has been both relative and absolute, and over the years a new rhetoric has come into existence to explain the current state of affairs, as well as to make certain that the blame is placed as far from home as possible. During the 1960's, the dominant themes of public discourse in Latin America were the allegedly "unequal terms of exchange" of goods and services or the supposed machinations of the "transnational corporations"; in the 1970's, all ills, economic and otherwise, were attributed to the lack of democratic government, due, supposedly, to the export of militarism and "McCarthyism" by the United States; in the 1980's, the new explanation has become the burden of Latin America's huge public and private debt. This is certainly not negligible; in 1988 it was estimated at somewhat in excess of $400 billion, the service on which represented slightly more than 42 percent of the value of exports. "The status quo is intolerable," states one report by a multinational commission. "As long as Latin America must pay out substantially more in interest than it obtains in new loans, the region will remain stuck on a treadmill of austerity, stagnation, and rising debt," the report continues, and concludes that the weakest performing economies of the region "require outright relief from a significant share of their obligations."*

Some Latin American political leaders have gone considerably further than this, demanding not merely debt relief or debt forgiveness, but the

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* *The Americas in 1989: Consensus for Action, A Report of the Inter-American Dialogue* (Washington, D. C., 1989).



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massive transfer of new resources, such as those which the Soviet Union and the United States will presumably possess as a result of the INF treaty and the general disarmament process. As Bolivian Vice President Julio Garrett Ayllón—by no means a man of the Left—recently stated, it would be terrible if funds excised from Western military budgets ended up being utilized by the industrialized countries to "improve and increase their technological development, thus postponing the aspirations of the underdeveloped countries which are greater in number and have the highest mortality, unemployment, and illiteracy rates."

Thus in a mere twenty years the political agenda in Latin America has gone from the need to liberate oneself from foreign economic influence and U. S. "imperialism" to asserting the obligation of the quondam imperialists to rescue societies on the verge of economic collapse. In times past, even quite irrational economic demands could be made more palatable by invoking the larger security imperative; in the post-cold-war world, the Latin Americans may find it significantly more difficult to get Washington to return their calls, much less to earmark for them larger portions of its dwindling budget for overseas assistance.

In no country is this dilemma placed in sharper relief than Peru, where the rate of inflation in 1988 reached 1,722 percent, more than *ten times* its previous record (158.3 percent) just three years ago. Personal income has declined steadily over the last ten years, and is now at the level of 1968. Massive strikes, often degenerating into violence, have become a commonplace, and only the sure conviction that a coup would lead to international isolation and sanctions by the U.S. Congress has prevented the armed forces, which gave up power to civilians in 1979, from seizing it once again. As if this were not enough, Peru is afflicted with a peculiar guerrilla movement, the so-called "Shining Path" (*Sendero Luminoso*5), which probably constitutes no more than 3,000 persons, but is capable of blacking out Lima, the capital, or other Peruvian cities at will, and posing a serious security threat in many areas of the countryside.

As in most Latin American countries, in Peru the contrast between rich and poor, between haves and have nots, is enormous, though not for lack of attempts at a radical solution. In fact, Peru has already had its revolution, complete with land reform, self-governing "industrial communities," expropriation of foreign oil companies, expulsion of the U.S. military mission, and the purchase of arms from the Soviet Union—all under a leftist military junta which was in power from 1968 to 1975. These policies bore a remarkable resemblance to those of Marxist Salvador Allende in neighboring Chile (1970-73). Indeed, the results were much the same—the only difference being that, having a military government to start with, the experiment ended not in a coup but in the surrender of authority to hapless civilians.

As far as Peru has gone, this would appear to some to be not far enough. The current president, Alan García Pérez, is a firebrand of the Latin American populist Left who took office in 1985 determined to square accounts with the United States and the International Monetary Fund, both of whom he held responsible for his country's problems. During the first two years of García's term, Peru reduced payments on its foreign debt (then estimated at $14 billion) to 10 percent of its export revenues; for a brief period the country enjoyed a modest consumer boom before it became apparent that debt service was only a small part of its economic problems. García's popularity, which was 67 percent at the beginning of his term, now hovers in the low teens, and sophisticated observers have reason to think that he has been actively conniving at a coup of his own as the only way of assuring his political future six or seven years hence. At this juncture, the Marxist mayor of Lima, José Barrantes, appears the most likely successor to García in next year's elections, though Barrantes may not successfully turn aside a mounting challenge from the novelist Mario Vargas Llosa, a political newcomer who is perhaps the most famous living Peruvian. If Barrantes does win, it will be interesting to see if an explicitly Marxist president can go farther than his predecessor in hurling the country backward toward the 16th century.

Peru would seem, then, to be a case study in the apparently limitless capacity of Latin American societies for self-mutilation. However, this may be true only at the level of public (that is, explicitly political) life. Beneath the surface there is another reality which holds out some hope for Peru's future and that of societies like it. Such, at any rate, is the import of Hernando de Soto's new book, *The Other Path*, which has already captured the imagination of readers in nearly two dozen Spanish-speaking countries, and is now available in English.* On one level, *The Other Path* is a study of how the Peruvian economic system actually works, to whose benefit, and at what cost. But on another level, De Soto's book amounts to a counter-manifesto to what passes for "development economics" in Latin America (as well as the United States and Western Europe), and an alternative theory of economic history. This is a great deal to ask of a single volume, yet De Soto carries it off with surprising success. At any rate, the study, which was conducted by the Institute for Liberty and Democracy (ILD) in Lima, a think-tank which De Soto heads, raises questions that will be difficult to ignore, and presents data that must either be

* Harper & Row, 271 pp., $22.95.

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refuted* or provoke some radical rethinking at places like the U.S. Agency for International Development and other bodies charged with the allocation of assistance to Third World countries.

*The Other Path* shows that there are two ways of looking at societies like Peru—either by measuring their economic performance in terms of the amount of wealth generated by enterprises licensed by the government (the "formal sector"), or by looking at their underground economies (the "informal sector"). In the case of Peru, it is De Soto's contention that in recent years fully 48 percent of the economically active population, representing 61.2 percent of all hours worked, has been engaged in informal activities which have contributed 38.9 percent of the GDP recorded in the country's national accounts. Without this informal sector, Lima today would have almost no housing and virtually no public transportation.

Like most Third World capitals, Lima has mushroomed into a sprawling metropolis over the last forty years, largely as the result of migration from rural areas. On paper, this growth has been strictly controlled by laws governing zoning and licensing. In fact, virtually the totality of the postwar city has been created in defiance of the law, successive portions having been gradually incorporated into the existing system through a succession of amnesties and recognitions purchased by pledges of political support to a succession of governments of the most varied ideological complexions.

Like most Latin American governments, one regime after another in Peru has come to power committed to "affordable housing." According to ILD calculations, between 1960 and 1984, the state invested $173.6 million† in housing, much of it presumably from foreign assistance. Yet this amounts to a mere 2.1 percent of the resources put into housing by the informal sector. In 1984 the total value of informal housing—that is, housing built without a permit—in Lima was in excess of *$8 billion,* and what is perhaps more to the point, equivalent to 69 percent of the country's long-term external debt in the same year.

Clearly, there is still a housing shortage in Lima, but not from lack of energy, capital, or commitment on the part of Peruvians, who have managed to circumvent the state and outperform it—spectacularly so.

The story is the same in public transportation. De Soto's group discovered that in 1984 fully *91 percent* of the facilities in Lima were being operated informally, by a fleet of buses, minibuses, and taxis, representing 41.2 percent of all public investment in Peru. Again, the contrast with the state is instructive. In 1973 the "reformist" military junta attempted to create the Metropolitan Federation of Transport Cooperatives. Though by the end of 1982 the Federation had received $12.9 million in subsidies, its fleet had actually declined in size—from 285 to 189 vehicles. Were President García (or his successor) to decide to outlaw the vast pirate armada of vehicles which provides the capital with transportation, he would have to come up with $620 million in replacement costs, leaving aside an additional $400 million in infrastructure (gas pumps, repair shops, and so forth).

These figures point to a fact often missed by journalists, diplomats, international civil servants, and humanitarians, namely, that the structure and dimensions of employment in Peru (and, presumably, other countries like it) are very different from those set forth in official figures. Quite apart from the people engaged in construction and transport, De Soto's group has found that fully 314,000 people in Lima are dependent upon street vending, which in 1985 represented $6.2 million worth of sales a week, $322.2 million a year. The net per-capita income from street vending was $58 a month, which may not seem like much to Americans, but is nearly four times the legal minimum wage. Technically, street vending is either illegal or subject to a welter of regulations tending to limit its extent, and various Peruvian governments have tried to circumscribe it by building markets where small-scale commercial transactions can take place. There are in fact some 57 of these markets in Lima, but the ILD has discovered that there are another 274 which officially do not exist—four out of five.

One might well ask why so large a part of the Peruvian economy is underground. The answer is that over the last two generations at least, every government, whether civilian or military, Left, Right, or Center, has enacted a welter of regulations whose effect is to stifle enterprise. In order to document the full dimensions of this problem, the Institute for Liberty and Democracy actually undertook to "walk through" a series of operations. Its researchers found that to get a building permit required 83 months of applications, litigation, and waiting. It took 26 months to obtain approval of a minibus route. To build a market, an average of *seventeen years* was required, De Soto reports, "from the formation of a minimarket until the market proper comes into operation." If someone were foolhardy enough to stay the course until a small industrial firm were finally established legally, which would take quite literally years, he would discover that to remain formal would cost 347.7 percent of the firm's after-tax profits and 11.3 percent of its production. "In other words," De Soto notes, "for every $100 that a small industrial firm must pay in order to remain legal, $22 goes to taxes, $73 to other legal costs, and $5 to utilities.

* The econometric models are not reproduced in the book, but are available from the publisher.

† All figures are based on the ILD's calculations and converted to U.S. dollars on the rate of exchange in 1984 or 1985.

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. . . The company's prosperity depends less on how well it does its work than on the costs imposed on it by law." Small wonder that so many people have deserted to informality.

An even more interesting question is why the Peruvian state would wish to stifle enterprise in the first place, particularly since the main effect of such a policy is to shrink its own tax base. The answer is that the organizing principle of all government activity in Peru (and indeed, in almost all Latin American countries) is to *distribute* income—and unearned income at that—rather than generate it. This, according to De Soto, has "transformed us into a democracy of pressure groups." He goes on:

> A legal system whose sole purpose is redistribution . . . benefits neither rich nor poor, but only those best organized to establish close ties with the people in power.
>
> It ensures that the businesses that remain in the market are those that are most efficient politically, not economically. . . .
>
> Thus, redistributive laws ultimately politicize all sectors of the population, which try to organize in order to live at the other's expense. Consumers press for prices below competitive levels, wage earners press for wages above them, established businesspeople try to prevent or delay any innovation that might damage their position, and employees exert pressure to keep their jobs and avoid replacement by more efficient workers.
>
> The system has forced all of us to become experts in obtaining protection or advantages from the state. . . . Some of the country's best talent and . . . best hours are spent on waging redistributive wars instead of achieving real progress.

This point becomes clearer when one turns to the specifics. The reason Lima has almost no legal public transportation is that over the years the government has imposed a series of controls on fares which are, to put it mildly, economically irrational. After these regulations drove several companies out of business, the state took them over, pumped millions of dollars into subsidizing them, and the fleet still shrank in size. However, the larger political purposes of the government were served—it could prove it was "caring" because it refused to buckle under to pressures to raise fares. The dirty secret is that if all Peruvians had obeyed the law, the city of Lima would have come to a total standstill.

There are many ways in which the explosion of Peru's informal sector can be regarded as a sign of the fundamental health of the society—its capacity to negotiate past irrational obstacles; the working energies of its people; the entrepreneurial skills which require no injection of "foreign aid" to blossom; the sheer power to create wealth by people who are, inevitably, very poor by Western standards. But as De Soto points out, two economic systems operating at cross purposes exact an unusually high price. The informals must disperse employees among a number of smaller and less visible workplaces, preventing the creation of critical mass or economies of scale. They cannot advertise their goods and services. They are fearful of entering certain markets. They are undercapitalized because they have no access to major sources of credit; even if they did, they would be hesitant to invest in certain major capital improvements lest they attract government attention.

There is also a point beyond which informal enterprises cannot expand. Because they are not legally recognized they cannot transfer their property easily; they cannot sell shares; they cannot convert debts into shares; they have great difficulty obtaining insurance; they must spend substantial amounts defending their possessions. In matters such as housing, there is a strong temptation to invest disproportionately in moveable objects (household electrical fixtures, for example) rather than in piping, drainage, and roofing. There is a tendency to rely upon word-of-mouth and personal recommendations rather than allow production, labor, and capital markets to remain wide open "and so achieve both economies of scale and increasingly efficient specialization."

Even so, the informals are hardly irrelevant to the formal system. That is, though they do not pay direct taxes on operations, they transfer resources to the government and other formal institutions through indirect taxation, inflation, and differences in the interest rate which they must pay to private and small-scale lenders. In 1985, for example, the ILD estimates that $1.367 billion—or 9.5 percent of the GDP—was transferred to the state from the informals. As De Soto points out, "This would have more than covered the central government's entire investments for that year, which came to $465 million."

De Soto's description of the Peruvian economy is redolent not of socialism but of the corporate state, with one major difference—successive governments have not succeeded in making the official structures coterminous with the system as a whole. Instead, there are really two Perus, one whose objective is to redistribute wealth, no matter how much this reduces the actual amount of wealth available (the formal sector), and another which operates according to the normal law of supply and demand, but given the legal context, must limit its scope and reach, lives in fear of discovery, and inevitably contributes less to society and to the state than it otherwise might do (the informals).

What De Soto suggests is that Peru is living in two historical times at once—officially, it inhabits a period similar to that of Western Europe during the reign of mercantilism; unofficially, it is battering down the walls that separate it from the modern world. In order to illustrate the met-

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aphor, De Soto devotes an entire chapter to comparative history, reminding us that for a very long period countries like England and France were organized in ways not very different from contemporary Peru. They too "had to support a large number of unproductive bureaucrats and lawyers, who served only to wrap, unwrap, and rewrap [their] countries' subjects in laws which controlled, distributed, redistributed, and assigned the privileges which strengthened the state and favored certain entrepreneurs." This approach was perhaps understandable in a period when most societies were isolated from one another; when levels of technology were abysmally low; when life expectancy was short; and when the notion of a finite universe was a logical response to the perceived environment. No such excuses can be provided to any state in the contemporary world, least of all in Latin America.

De Soto goes even further, and provides an entirely new twist to Marx's theory of historical development. He argues that the degree to which European societies have succeeded in making the transition to modernity and democracy depends directly upon their capacity to make the jump from mercantilism to capitalism. This provides him with a continuum, with England on one end, France in the center, and Russia on the far side. "The lesson to be learned from Europe," he writes,

> is that a declining mercantilist government which resists the necessary institutional changes is opening the door wide to violence and disorder. It may delay the final outcome at the cost of repression and considerable suffering, but sooner or later the contradictions will probably be solved either by a Communist dictatorship or by coexistence within a democratic system and a market economy.

Some may find this affirmation a bit too sweeping. Economic historians of Western Europe will no doubt quibble over some of his interpretations of British, French, or Russian history, but clearly De Soto is onto something very important, at least as far as Peru is concerned. One of the ways in which the issue has been confused in that country has been the tendency of beneficiaries of the official system (owners of large-scale businesses benefiting from government subsidies, direct or indirect)—in other words, the political Right—to adopt the language and ideological stance of their confrères in modern Western countries. This leads the traditional Left, not unnaturally, to confuse the two systems and conclude that "although private ownership of the means of production predominates, the development the country needs has not been achieved, proving that capitalism has failed and that a collectivist model is needed." In short, in Peruvian politics both Left and Right are debating the merits of a system which exists only at the margins.

Actually, there is very little private property in Peru, in the sense that most people have no legal right to the wealth they have created. De Soto shows how some groups, particularly urban settlements, have used partisan politics to negotiate recognition of what they already enjoy in usufruct. Nonetheless, most people enjoy only what he calls the "expectative rights of property." If the system were opened up, and the right to property made universal, this would have the effect of freeing vast productive forces currently either underground or not yet congealed into wealth, propelling Peru toward a capitalist revolution of a type not yet seen in Latin America.

De Soto has never made any claims that his book does anything more than describe what the Institute for Liberty and Democracy found in Peru. Yet since *The Other Path* was published, he has been flooded with mail, phone calls, and visits from people from Mexico, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, and Argentina, all of whom have assured him that "if you change the names of the towns or the names of organizations, you have [my country]." These include industrialists, labor leaders, even the vice president of a South American country. If they are right, then important political choices lie ahead. Will the region be able to make them? It is a tall order—given, particularly, the continuing domination in every country of a political class trained only in the jurisprudence of the old system. This class lives in a parasitic fashion on the diminishing wealth created by the formal system, and is egged on by the vast infrastructures of development organizations favoring an international welfare state.

The truth is, however, that no vast international transfers of wealth are likely to take place in the 90's: the only hope for the survival of democracy in the region is the diffusion of property and the enfranchisement of those who actually work and create wealth. The Latin American politicians are right about one thing: the current economic crisis is undermining the stability of the region, and raises the very real specter of a plunge into a full-dress collectivism. But the answer to this is more economic freedom, not less. "We have to call things by their real name," Spanish President Felipe González recently said. "Their economic system doesn't work. The explanations their leaders give for the poor results are no longer convincing." He was referring to the socialist states of Eastern Europe, but his remark might just as easily be addressed to his colleagues in Latin America. Hernando de Soto has given them a road map to the future; one can only hope they will prove capable of taking it.

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# Why My Grandfather Leon Trotsky Must Be Turning in His Grave

*Yulia Akselrod*

THE first place I remember was a big room, divided by a partition, in a rather spacious communal apartment in Moscow. I lived there in the late 30's with my maternal grandparents. My paternal grandfather, Leon Trotsky (born Lev Bronstein), was in exile in Mexico, where he would be murdered in 1940 on orders of Stalin. His elder son, Lev Sedov, who had gone into exile at the same time as his father, would die under mysterious circumstances in Paris in 1938. As for my own father, Trotsky's younger son, Sergei Sedov, when last seen he had been in a prison in Krasnoyarsk, sent there after being arrested in 1935 and sentenced on charges of conspiracy against the state. My mother, finally, was serving a ten-year term in the vast labor-camp complex of Kolyma, in northeastern Siberia.

I knew my mother was in Kolyma, since Grandma was always sending her food parcels, but I never really knew why she was there. I had never asked either of my grandparents about it, and of course I never asked any questions at all about my father. As a kind of safety measure, my grandparents never told me anything, and I never pressed them—partly, I suppose, because I got all the love and care I needed (maybe even more) and partly because I didn't want to put my beloved grandmother on the spot.

Our life together in Moscow came to a sad end in 1951. One of the rooms in our communal apartment—a dingy room that had once been a bathroom—was occupied by a handsome, gray-haired old lady who turned out to be an informer for the secret police. Because of her, or maybe for some other reason, they came to get us on the night of May 10, 1951. They searched our apartment and Grandma kept asking Grandpa, "Misha, what did you do? Tell me what you did, Misha." "I didn't do anything," Grandpa kept saying over and over. They took him away first, then Grandma, and me they took to an orphanage. Grandpa was seventy-two, Grandma was sixty-seven, and I was fifteen.

I stayed in the vigilantly guarded orphanage for three months, living with girls from all sorts of backgrounds (the boys lived separately), until the day I was taken from the orphanage and brought to a freight train standing some distance from the railway station—right into the arms of my grandparents. They had been sentenced to five years of exile in Siberia as "socially dangerous elements" and I was to go with them into exile. The train brought us to Novosibirsk, where we were put into a pre-transit jail while we waited for the convoy to start out.

The heat in Novosibirsk was unbearable. They fed us rotten fish which smelled awful and a lot of people got diarrhea. The wooden bucket that served as a toilet stood right on the floor of our cell and we slept in cramped double-decker bunks lined up against the walls. I had a spot on the upper level, and Grandma was down on the floor.

Among the women in our cell was a niece of Julius Martov, the leader of the Social Democratic faction opposed to the Bolsheviks (she had met her uncle once in her whole life—at the age of fourteen) and also the wife and daughter of Lenin's old comrade, Serge Eismont. I also remember many girls in their twenties from Estonia and Latvia, who had already served five-year terms in labor camps and were now going into exile like us. It was in Novosibirsk that I first met common (i.e., nonpolitical) criminals and came to know those black vans used for transporting prisoners that have been described so often in Soviet prison-camp literature.

In 1952, when I was going on sixteen, I left my grandparents and went to live with my mother in a village called Yagodny, about 350 miles north of Magadan, high up in the Kolyma mountain range. Mother had completed her ten-year term but was still serving five years of compulsory residence in Siberia. The two of us didn't hit it off too well. For one thing, I couldn't bring myself to address her as "Mom," for this term just wasn't part of my vocabulary. Even when I had a child

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myself, ten years later, I felt funny when he called me "Mom," and to this day it's hard for me to sign my letters to him that way.

I was not alone in my problems. At the school I attended—I was in ninth grade—there were some kids with normal families, most often people who had come to Kolyma voluntarily to work under contract to the government. But the rest were children of political prisoners whose lives had been disrupted in one way or another. Some had lived with their mothers while their fathers were doing time and had then come to Kolyma after their fathers' release. Others—the majority—had been stuck in orphanages while both parents were serving time.

Kolyma had its own traditions. One of them was that the "contractors" did not socialize with the ex-"convicts," and intermarriage between the two groups was extremely rare. Despite this, everyone knew everyone else's business and nothing could be kept hidden for long. Once, to give a trivial example, I was having a typical schoolgirl romance with a boy from a higher grade. One day, without a word of explanation, he stopped talking to me, and refused even to look at me when we passed in the corridor. I was hurt and mystified until a neighbor of his family dropped in one day and told us that the boy's parents ("contractors" and party members, I suppose) had forbidden him to go out with me because of our family connection.

Apart from the gossip, the main thing I remember about Kolyma was the cold. Temperatures in winter were 45-50 degrees below zero centigrade, and there were plenty of stray cats wandering around with their ears frozen off to prove it. We lived in a wooden shed (with an outhouse in the yard) that was barely warmed by a wood-burning stove and two electric heaters which were never turned off. There was no plumbing, of course, so water was brought in every day and kept in a tub by the door. In winter the water froze solid, and we had to chop up the ice into small pieces and then melt it. The cold was especially hard on the two dogs and innumerable cats we had hanging around the place (my mother was an animal lover); the dogs particularly would often singe their fur trying to get warm on the electric heaters.

In January 1953 Stalin died—"So he's croaked at last," was my mother's reaction upon hearing the news. My grandparents were now free to leave Siberia, though they were denied permission to live in Moscow. I for some reason was exempt from this prohibition, probably because of my age. Back in Moscow I enrolled in a two-year technical school to study chemistry, not because I loved the subject but because I had common sense. My calculations proved correct: with a chemistry degree I never had much of a problem finding a job either in the Soviet Union or, later, in the United States.

Soon after our return, Grandpa died and Grandma moved closer to Moscow. We began living together once more, renting dismal rooms in dismal apartments while waiting for a permanent room of our "own." In 1957 or '58 we managed to get one in a three-room communal apartment on the outskirts of Moscow, which we shared with two other families. I graduated from the technical school, got myself a job, and started taking college courses at night to qualify for a regular degree.

Thinking back on it now, I realize that the families of both my maternal grandparents were not very Jewish. (About my father's side of the family I naturally know a lot less, to this day.) Grandma's grandfather had been a cantonist—a young Jewish boy conscripted at a very early age into Czar Nicholas I's army, and required to serve for twenty-five years. The families of cantonists were allowed to live in areas generally barred to Jews, but in the course of things they often lost their Jewish identity (some of the young conscripts had to undergo forced baptism). Grandma's family seems to have been thoroughly assimilated even before the Revolution; so far as I could tell, there was nothing the least bit Jewish about them. There were twelve children in the family, of whom Grandma was the eldest, and all of them, boys and girls alike, got a good education and went on to more advanced studies. Grandma's brothers, a jolly crew, drank a lot and I was very fond of them.

Grandpa's family was just as assimilated. He was the eldest of eight children, followed by my Uncle Ilyusha and six others. According to family lore (which I learned only as an adult), Uncle Ilyusha had urged the whole family to leave right after the Revolution, and never forgave them for not doing so, but Grandpa and the sisters refused, the latter screaming that they could never leave a country that had produced Tolstoy and Chekhov. In the years ahead these sisters at least never had any children to worry about, but the brother's daughter served time in Soviet prisons, just as my mother did.

As for my own generation—that of the grandchildren—many of us wanted to emigrate, but I turned out to be the fastest.

I met my future husband, a fellow chemistry student and a fellow Jew, at a party given at the college we both attended. Three months later we went on vacation together in the south, and decided to marry as soon as we got back. I had told him about my family connections but he let me know right away that he had no intention of informing his parents.

As it turned out, however, his mother had already heard the dread news, and when we got back to Moscow, with me a little bit pregnant, there was an uproar. His father instructed him to

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forget about marriage and to come home immediately—and this, mind you, was already 1960!

My future father-in-law was not just a party member, but had actually worked for the secret police in the 1930's. Though he had tasted all the hardships of being a Jew in the Soviet Union—first at college, then in graduate school, then later on at his various jobs—his devotion to the Communist party never wavered. I don't know which impulse was stronger, loyalty to the party or love of his son, though in the end I would have to say that the latter prevailed.

My fiancé begged me to let him live at home for a while, till his parents got used to the idea of our marriage, but that was exactly what I didn't want. I had never met people like them before—Jewish party members who had worked for the Cheka—and we fought about it day and night. Once I remember shouting, "People like your father used to kill people like my father!" and he shouted back that rice gets cleaner when you throw away the bad grains. (I think he was quoting Beria.) Generally, my husband was very "right-wing" in his views but then he would suddenly reverse himself, and I always got nervous when he started expressing his political opinions in public.

We fought for about five months, until his father finally resigned himself to the situation. To mark the reconciliation, we went to visit his parents, and I remember having great difficulty kissing my father-in-law—he had a huge potbelly and I was very pregnant by that time. About a month after this visit my father-in-law died and my husband and I began fighting even more, since he blamed his father's death on me. When our son was born, we fought more than ever, this time because my husband insisted on naming the boy David after his father, despite my furious objections. I had nothing against the name itself but it seemed to me that for parents in the Soviet Union to give their baby a Jewish name was like stamping a six-pointed yellow star on its forehead with their own hands. In the end I won, and got my husband's permission to change the boy's name from David to Vadim. The result of it all was that we hardly ever called our son by his first name. Instead we referred to him as "the Boy," as in "Where's the Boy?" or "Has the Boy eaten yet?"

Now, twenty-five years later, when I visit my ex-sister-in-law in New York City, I gaze at my father-in-law's picture on the wall and think how amazed he would be if he had the slightest inkling of where his progeny are today, and where his own picture now hangs!

MY MARRIED life seems in retrospect one long housing problem. At first my husband came to live with Grandma and me; that made three of us (four, after our son was born) in one room. The other occupants of the three-room apartment were a carpenter and his wife and two children and a woman who had just returned from a ten-year stint in a labor camp. Eventually, Grandma died and the woman from the camp moved out, which made things roomier but brought us into closer contact with the carpenter's family.

The carpenter was an alcoholic—not of the rowdy sort, but he did sometimes pee in the hallway—and in private I used to call his family "the troglodytes." One day my son asked me what the word meant, and I made the mistake of telling him it meant "cave people." The next time I saw the carpenter he growled, "So you think we're cave people, eh?" and from then on we were in a state of war which ended with my husband beating up the carpenter and our moving.

This was now about 1970, and there was a terrific housing shortage in Moscow. The only way to move was to try and work out some kind of exchange with other people. There were a few spots in the city where people looking for apartments would congregate, walking around in a circle with placards describing what they had to offer and what they were looking for. Eventually, we managed to arrange one of these complicated exchanges but it was far from a total success. Six or seven years later we got involved in still another housing exchange that was so complex it can hardly be explained without diagrams; suffice it to say that my husband and I had to get divorced and remarried in order to put the plan into effect.

By this time, in any case, our days in the Soviet Union were numbered. Anti-Semitism was growing worse, and apart from the problem it posed for someone with my lack of self-control, it was also beginning to take its toll of our son. More than once my husband was called in for talks with school officials (I always went in his place) and I soon gathered from these talks that my son, along with virtually every other Jewish boy in the school, was being required to defend his dignity in constant fistfights. All that the school authorities wanted from me was to explain to my son that he shouldn't react so badly to the word *Jew* (the word *kike* was never mentioned, of course). All I wanted in turn was for the school authorities to stop the practice of listing a student's nationality in the class roster.

There were no winners in this struggle, but when the Boy in due course finally graduated from high school, he at least could claim victory of a kind: he had managed to get through school without ever joining the Komsomol—no easy feat.

Around that time the Boy got his passport with a photograph of himself and the word "Jew" printed in big letters. His father came home from work, took a close look at the passport, and said: "We've got to leave." For once we were in agreement, though there were all sorts of arrangements to be made and hurdles to be overcome before we could actually emigrate. Among the lesser of these

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was the resistance of my mother-in-law who was still as devoted as ever to her late husband's ideals, and kept warning her son that what with the well-known unemployment problem in the U.S., he would never be able to find a job.

MY MOTHER was the first person to tell me about my father. She always said that for all the horrors of her years in Kolyma she never once regretted her decision to follow Sergei Sedov into exile, so extraordinary a person had he been.

According to my mother, Sergei left the Trotsky home very early, at the age of sixteen or so—not out of any political motives but out of a youthful passion for adventure. He wandered far and wide, then joined a traveling circus and worked with it until his marriage a few years later. This first marriage was to a woman some years his senior who worked as a librarian (her fate, I believe, was much like my mother's). It was thanks to her that Sergei went back to school, and eventually became an engineer. In 1934, at the country house of some mutual friends, he met my mother (who was also married to someone else) and they soon began living together, though Mother always felt guilty toward the other woman. A year later Sergei was arrested, and according to my mother both women used to visit him in jail at the same time, both calling themselves "Sergei Sedov's wife." This was possible in those days, when rules about marriage and divorce were much looser.

Soon after his arrest Sergei was sent into exile in Krasnoyarsk, and everyone tried to talk Mother out of following him. When she persisted, her closest friends stopped talking to her. My grandparents were bitterly opposed, and in fact they never got over it. I still remember one incident connected to this that was for me the very worst moment of our own later exile. The three of us were sitting by the side of a dusty road in Siberia waiting for a convoy to move us. A local peasant woman had brought us some vegetables, and as we sat there eating them my grandmother started weeping and cursing my mother and saying over and over: "We told her not to go, we told her not to go."

My parents' married life together in Krasnoyarsk was very brief. When Mother was in her sixth month of pregnancy with me, Sergei was arrested again and kept in the pre-transit jail in Krasnoyarsk for about a month. The rules were not very strictly observed, and Mother was allowed to talk to him from the prison yard. He could see her from his cell window through a chink in that shutter device they use in prisons to block out the sky, but she couldn't see him. One day he called down to her, "Go back to Moscow, they're taking me away tomorrow." The next day, when she returned to the prison, someone shouted from a window that Sergei had been taken away. Mother went back to Moscow, where she was treated like a leper by all her friends until she was herself arrested two years later and sent to Kolyma.

That is about all I am able to relate about my father's life, but a more tangible reminder exists in the form of a group of letters he wrote to my mother from Krasnoyarsk in 1935, while waiting impatiently for her to arrive. After my mother's arrest, these letters were kept for her—at great peril—by a close friend named Lev Okhimovich, the only non-family member who was brave enough to visit us during my childhood. In 1957 or '58, when we finally got our own room in Moscow, Uncle Lyovushka, as I used to call him, handed the letters over to me for safekeeping and I returned them to Mother in 1960 when she left Kolyma for good and returned to the mainland. I remember her telling me at the time that Sergei had some stationery from Trotsky's office in his possession, and sometimes used it, for his own amusement, when writing letters to his friends. A funny prank, but a dangerous one.

AS A child in the Soviet Union, I once saw a documentary film about the behavioral scientist Ivan Pavlov. In one episode (the only one I remember) a huge flood engulfs St. Petersburg (or maybe it was already called Leningrad). Pavlov's dogs lose all their conditioned reflexes and his assistant says to him, "Ivan Petrovich, all the reflexes are gone—as though swept away." "That's it exactly," Pavlov replies, "they've been swept away in the flood."

That is what happened to me after I emigrated—everything from the past seemed to have been swept away and I was thoroughly disoriented. To begin with, my husband and I separated. He had confessed on the eve of our departure that he was in love with another woman, who might soon be coming to join him, and there seemed to be no reason left for us to go on living together. On top of that, shortly after we arrived in the United States in the late 1970's our son, amazingly enough, became a deeply observant Orthodox Jew. He changed his name back to David and announced his intention of emigrating to Israel as soon as possible.

As though all this were not confusing enough, about five months after we got here I had my first encounter with the American Left. The occasion was a meeting at New York University, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Trotsky's birth. Somewhere in my wanderings I had seen a poster advertising the event, and I couldn't contain my curiosity.

I'm not sure what I expected, but the event simply astounded me. Here we were at the very beginning of the Iran hostage crisis, and there was a huge black-and-green banner on the wall shouting, "Long live the revolution in Iran!" Given my lack of English, I could hardly understand the speeches, but it was not hard to guess what they

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were about—I had heard them before, after all. After the speeches came a documentary film tracing the history of Russia and the Soviet Union from czarist times to the present. First we saw the czar and his family, then the czar's ministers, then Tolstoy; next we saw the Revolution, and the Civil War; finally, we saw Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky, Lenin's funeral, and last but not least Trotsky's departure from the scene. I felt sure I was the only person in the room who could grasp the true meaning of these images, but there was no way I could communicate that knowledge.

When the meeting was over, I couldn't resist revealing my identity to the people who had organized it. I had a feeling that they didn't believe me, but they did introduce me, right then and there, to a man named Harold Robinson, who had been Trotsky's bodyguard in Mexico. Harold and I soon became good friends, though I sometimes had to suppress the urge to kill the dear fellow.

He was a true believer—a man who had never lost faith in Trotsky's ideas and his dream of a world revolution—and we never stopped arguing. He kept urging me to read Marx and I kept telling him I had been forced to swallow all that stuff for four years at college and hated it violently (as did all the other students). Most of all I hated the Marxist principle, which had constantly been drummed into us, that "freedom is the conscious recognition of necessity." I understood the necessity part all too well, since my whole life had been dominated by it—I just couldn't see any freedom in it. Telling all this to Harold was like talking to the wall. I had nothing but my experience to go on, after all, whereas he had a vision.

My son did finally emigrate to Israel, where he studied in a yeshiva, moved with his Orthodox wife to Hebron on the West Bank, and served in the army during the war in Lebanon. One night, watching the news on TV, I suddenly saw him on the screen driving an Israeli tank, and burst into tears. Up until then I had been quite sure he would sooner or later come back to the U.S.; now I realized that this was not to be.

Soon after, I went to visit my son in Israel and told him that I would rather have seen him in a chemistry institute in Moscow (to which he had been admitted shortly before we left) than driving an Israeli tank. He was deeply offended—and rightly so, as I have since come to understand. It took me a while to figure it out, but I now know that our departure from Russia was worthwhile if it gave a young man like him the chance to choose the road he wants to follow, and to live in a country he cares about so much that he would give his life to defend it. What Leon Trotsky, his atheist Bolshevik great-grandfather, the world revolutionist, would make of this Orthodox Israeli tankist is too dizzying a question even to contemplate. He must be turning in his grave.

*Postscript*: In November 1988 the Soviet government announced that it had "lifted all charges" against my father.

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# American Jews: Diehard Conservatives

*Milton Himmelfarb*

## I

They have learned nothing and forgotten nothing.
—TALLEYRAND

TALLEYRAND meant the Bourbon loyalists, a byword ever since for diehard conservativism. A diehard is "a person who obstinately refuses to abandon old theories or policies, one who resists change," or alternatively "an extreme conservative." Because diehards can be of the Left as well as the Right, in the Soviet Union unreconstructed Marxist-Leninists are called conservatives.

In the United States the 1988 presidential voting showed what diehard conservatives American Jews are. Times have changed and America has changed. Most whites once voted for Democratic presidential candidates but have long since changed to voting for Republicans. Irish Americans used to joke that their babies were baptized into the Catholic Church and the Democratic party, but no longer. Practically alone among white voters, American Jews have changed hardly at all. Only in 1980 did they fail to give the Democratic candidate a substantial majority, and then it was John Anderson's independent candidacy that caused them to give Carter a mere plurality. Clinging more than most to old attachments and habits, American Jews may fairly be called more conservative than most.

## II

THE voters gave the Republican George Bush 53 percent and the Democrat Michael Dukakis 46 percent. Of Jewish voters—about 4 percent of the total though only 2.5 percent of the population—four different exit polls gave four different large majorities to Dukakis, ranging from CBS's 65 percent to CNN's 74 percent.

JEWISH PRESIDENTIAL VOTE, 1988, BY EXIT POLL

| | Bush | Dukakis |
|---|---|---|
| CBS | 35% | 65% |
| ABC | 30% | 69% |
| NBC | 29% | 71% |
| CNN | 24% | 74% |

Disagreeing about exact percentages, the polls nevertheless agreed that Jews voted for Dukakis by a landslide. As ABC's Jewish results lie midway between CBS's and CNN's extremes, the figures below are either copied or derived from ABC's tables unless labeled otherwise.

Jews were not the only group to give a majority of their vote to Dukakis.

SOME OTHER DUKAKIS MAJORITIES

| | |
|---|---|
| Unemployed (3% of total) | 65% |
| Union household (10%) | 64% |
| No health insurance (6%) | 58% |
| Factory workers (6%) | 55% |
| Working mothers (17%) | 50% (Bush 49%) |

1. *Race*

No others gave Dukakis as much of their vote as blacks: 88 percent.

DUKAKIS VOTE: BLACKS, ALL WHITES, AND NON-JEWISH WHITES

| | |
|---|---|
| Blacks (8% of total) | 88% |
| All whites (88%) | 41% |
| Non-Jewish whites (84%) | 40% |

2. *Religion*

The Jews' 69 percent was more than Dukakis got from any other group defined by religion.

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DUKAKIS VOTE BY RELIGION

| | |
|---|---|
| Jewish (4% of total) | 69% |
| No religion (8%) | 63% |
| No religion, white (6%) | 61% |
| Catholic (28%) | 51% |
| Catholic, white (24%) | 47% |
| Non-Catholic Christian (55%) | 37% |
| Non-Catholic Christian, white (48%) | 31% |
| Born-again Christian (15%) | 25% |
| Born-again Christian, white (12%) | 18% |

At least in voting, the rightist Orthodox resemble not their fellow Jews but born-again Christians. After the election, the New York Jewish Community Relations Council published a report containing this information:

PRESIDENTIAL VOTE IN HEAVILY JEWISH VOTING DISTRICTS IN THREE BROOKLYN NEIGHBORHOODS

| | Bush | Dukakis |
|---|---|---|
| Boro Park | 72% | 28% |
| Crown Heights | 77% | 24% |
| Williamsburg | 86% | 15% |

These Jews had earlier given lopsided majorities to Ronald Reagan.

3. *Ethnic origin*

ABC's 23,000+ respondents included 155 who checked "Greek" in answer to the question, "Which category best describes most of your ancestors?" If the 155 are representative, Mr. Dukakis will not be pleased. They gave their fellow Greek only 55 percent of their vote.

Hispanics too gave less than Jews did to Dukakis. In 1984, ABC's Hispanics had given less than Jews did to Walter Mondale.

DUKAKIS VOTE BY ETHNIC ORIGIN

| | |
|---|---|
| Hispanic (3% of total) | 66% |
| Greek (1%) | 55% |
| Polish and other Slavic (7%) | 54% |
| Catholic Irish (5%) | 50% |
| Italian (6%) | 46% |
| Scandinavian (4%) | 43% |
| Asian (1%) | 43% |
| German/Austrian (23%) | 39% |
| English, Scottish, Welsh (28%) | 35% |
| Protestant Irish (4%) | 34% |

4. *Sex*

Once again women voted Democratic more than men.

DUKAKIS VOTE BY SEX

| | All voters | Non-Jews | Jews |
|---|---|---|---|
| Men | 42% | 39% | 63% |
| Women | 49% | 46% | 75% |

The Dukakis vote of Jewish women exceeded that of non-Jewish women more than the Dukakis vote of Jewish men exceeded that of non-Jewish men, and the Dukakis vote of Jewish women exceeded that of Jewish men more than the Dukakis vote of non-Jewish women exceeded that of non-Jewish men. Voters who described themselves as strong feminists gave Dukakis 72 percent—less than Jewish women did.

I am not sure what it means that among non-Jewish voters 52 percent were women and 48 percent were men, while among Jewish voters it was the other way around: 52 percent men to 48 percent women. When something like that happened in 1980 I speculated ("Are Jews Becoming Republican?" COMMENTARY, August 1981) that some Jewish women, unwilling to vote for Carter or Anderson and incapable of voting for a Republican, may have solved their problem by sitting out the election.

5. *Ideology*

Asked whether they were liberal, conservative, or "somewhere in between," more non-Jews called themselves conservative than in-between, and more called themselves in-between than liberal. Jews were their mirror image.

VOTERS' IDEOLOGIES

| | All | Non-Jews | Jews |
|---|---|---|---|
| Liberal | 25% | 24% | 46% |
| In-between | 32% | 32% | 29% |
| Conservative | 43% | 44% | 25% |

If liberal meant voting for Dukakis and conservative meant not voting for him, then non-Jewish liberals were less liberal than Jewish liberals, and Jewish conservatives less conservative than non-Jewish conservatives.

DUKAKIS VOTE BY IDEOLOGY

| | All | Non-Jews | Jews |
|---|---|---|---|
| Liberal | 83% | 82% | 91% |
| In-between | 54% | 54% | 67% |
| Conservative | 16% | 16% | 30% |

6. *Age*

The average Jewish voter was forty-four years old and the average non-Jewish voter forty.

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VOTERS' AGES

| | All | Non-Jews | Jews |
|---|---|---|---|
| 18-24+ | 10% | 10% | 7% |
| 25-29+ | 12% | 12% | 8% |
| 30-39+ | 27% | 27% | 26% |
| 40-49+ | 20% | 20% | 22% |
| 50-59+ | 14% | 14% | 15% |
| 60 and over | 17% | 17% | 22% |

A graph of non-Jewish Dukakis voting by age would show a fairly level line, within a range of only 5 points. A Jewish graph line would be climbing and jagged, with fully 20 points of difference between voters in their thirties and voters in the age group immediately below, the upper twenties.

DUKAKIS VOTE BY AGE

| | All | Non-Jews | Jews |
|---|---|---|---|
| 18-24+ | 47% | 47% | 60% |
| 25-29+ | 42% | 42% | 55% |
| 30-39+ | 46% | 45% | 75% |
| 40-49+ | 46% | 45% | 69% |
| 50-59+ | 44% | 43% | 63% |
| 60 and over | 48% | 47% | 72% |

Among both Jews and non-Jews, voters in the second half of their twenties were the least pro-Dukakis. Among Jews the runners-up were even younger, under twenty-five.

Studies of college freshmen have found Jewish young men and women somewhat to the Right of their older brothers and sisters. Does this mean that they will continue to be to the Right of the Jewish norm? It may mean only that they have not yet been fully acculturated or socialized into the American Jewish community. More liberal voting may come later, much like joining a congregation when the children reach school age.

7. *Income*

The answers to a question about household income before taxes showed Jews' average income to be higher than others'. That is due mostly to higher age and more years of education.

VOTERS' INCOMES

| | All | Non-Jews | Jews |
|---|---|---|---|
| $0- 9,999 | 13% | 13% | 5% |
| $10,000-19,999 | 16% | 16% | 10% |
| $20,000-29,999 | 19% | 20% | 14% |
| $30,000-39,999 | 18% | 18% | 14% |
| $40,000-49,999 | 13% | 13% | 12% |
| $50,000 and over | 22% | 21% | 46% |

(Not all respondents answered every question; 4 percent of non-Jews and 3 percent of Jews did not answer the question about income.)

DUKAKIS VOTE BY INCOME

| | All | Non-Jews | Jews |
|---|---|---|---|
| $0- 9,999 | 62% | 61% | 76% |
| $10,000-19,999 | 50% | 49% | 78% |
| $20,000-29,999 | 47% | 46% | 62% |
| $30,000-39,999 | 43% | 42% | 69% |
| $40,000-49,999 | 39% | 38% | 64% |
| $50,000 and over | 38% | 35% | 69% |

A graph line of the non-Jewish vote for Dukakis would drop steadily, from a high in the poorest bracket to a low in the richest. A graph line of the Jewish vote for Dukakis would zigzag, with $50,000 and over, for example, higher than $40,000-49,999. Among non-Jews, only voters with income of less than $10,000 gave Dukakis a majority, and that was smaller than the Dukakis majority of any Jewish income group. The difference between Jewish and non-Jewish voting was greatest for income of $50,000 and over—34 points.

8. *Education*

As a group, Jewish voters had more years of schooling than others. Almost two-thirds were college graduates, more than a third had done graduate work, and fewer than a fifth had never started college.

VOTERS' EDUCATION

| | All | Non-Jews | Jews |
|---|---|---|---|
| Less than high-school graduate | 7% | 7% | 3% |
| High-school graduate | 27% | 27% | 15% |
| Some college | 29% | 30% | 19% |
| College graduate | 22% | 22% | 28% |
| Postgraduate | 15% | 14% | 35% |

We do not need exit polls to know that there is a relation between income and education. People with more education than others tend to make more money than others, and people with more money can afford more education for their children. With one exception, a graph line of non-Jewish voting by education would look like a line of voting by income, the poorest and least-educated voting most for Dukakis and least for Bush, and the richest and most-educated vice versa.

DUKAKIS VOTE BY EDUCATION

| | All | Non-Jews | Jews |
|---|---|---|---|
| Less than high-school graduate | 60% | 60% | 44% |
| High-school graduate | 48% | 48% | 70% |
| Some college | 42% | 41% | 66% |
| College graduate | 40% | 39% | 66% |
| Postgraduate | 50% | 48% | 74% |

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The exception is that the non-Jewish Dukakis vote, having dropped, bracket after bracket, until it reached a low with the college graduates, then rose to tie postgraduates with high-school graduates. This is an example of the J-curve, so called from the upward hook at the end. A graph line of Jewish voting by education would look more like a U-curve.

Some would explain the higher Dukakis vote of postgraduates as due to a "liberalizing" effect of higher education, but the explanation has certain weaknesses. First, correlation is notoriously not the same as cause. Second, "liberal (izing)" in the mouth of a social scientist today can have a somewhat different meaning from what it had for either Jefferson or Marx. A colleague of the late Robert Lekachman could eulogize him for having "brought a liberal, left-wing, Marxist point of view to economics."

As for "higher education," it has always been understood to include college as well as graduate school. But the college graduates here, Jews and non-Jews alike, are not conspicuously more liberal in their voting than anyone else.

Finally, there is the chicken-and-egg difficulty. Which comes first? Does graduate school—or professional school—make people "liberal," or do liberals like to go to graduate school? Friedrich von Hayek once said that his conservative students became bankers and his radical students became professors.

The table shows that 3 percent of Jewish voters did not graduate from high school and that, exceptionally, they gave Dukakis less than half of their votes. This means only that of the 848 Jews caught in ABC's net, 27 checked "some high school or less"; and that of these, 12 also checked "Dukakis." The sample is too small.

## III

Give or take a few percentage points, the Jewish exit-poll figures in 1988 could just as well be from 1984, when it was Mondale the Jews flocked to, or 1976, when it was Carter, or even 1972, when it was McGovern. Nothing would seem to have been new in 1988.

But of course something was new—Jesse Jackson, or rather not the man himself but the size and weight of him. In 1980 he stood behind President Carter as Carter acknowledged defeat. In 1984 he had grown powerful enough to keep the Democratic convention from considering a resolution against anti-Semitism. In 1988 his zealots were more than a quarter of the delegates at the Democratic convention, and he and they set its tone and dominated its imagery.

On election day 1988 it was almost certain that Dukakis would lose and almost equally certain that he would then join earlier defeated Democratic candidates who no longer counted, including the former President. Most certain of all was that in 1992 Jackson, and the Jackson phenomenon, would be bigger and weightier than ever—if, that is, the Democratic party were not taught a lesson in the meantime.

During the primaries every candidate for the Democratic nomination had attacked every other candidate—except Jackson. The partisans of every candidate had criticized and ridiculed every other candidate—except Jackson. When the Jewish mayor of New York said that a Jew would have to be crazy to vote for Jackson, every Democrat who spoke up spoke up to denounce not Jackson the anti-Semite (or at least the loyal friend of the leading anti-Semitic demagogue) but his lone critic.

For the good of the Democratic party itself, as of its values and goals, it was necessary that the party should be made to pay a high price for its subservience to an anti-Semite (or loyal friend of the leading anti-Semitic demagogue). And it was necessary for Jews to teach the party that lesson by withdrawing, if only this once, their traditional support. When the lesson was learned they could return. And if not, not.

Now assume that by a fluke Dukakis actually did win. While Jackson would not be in the White House, his powerful influence surely would be. Even if Dukakis wanted to refuse Jackson the right to name some key officials and to veto others—in State and Defense—could he refuse it, politically? Jackson would be able to block American support for Israel.

So the Jews went and voted as if Jackson did not exist.

It is not that they were unaware of him. In the spring of 1984 and the spring of 1988 Steven M. Cohen surveyed Jewish opinion for the American Jewish Committee. One question, with an unfortunate change in wording, was about Jackson.

AMERICAN JEWISH OPINION OF JESSE JACKSON, 1984 AND 1988

| | Yes | Not sure | No |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1984: "Do you think Jesse Jackson is anti-Semitic?" | 75% | 18% | 8% |
| 1988: "Is Jesse Jackson anti-Semitic?" | 56% | 33% | 11% |

The 3-point difference between the "no" answers of 1984 and 1988 is probably nothing more than a happenstance of polling. How much of the 19-point fall-off in the "yes" answers is due to a real change and how much to the change in wording, we cannot tell. Yet even in 1988 more than half still said that Jackson was an anti-Semite and only one in nine denied it.

Some people mistrust "not sure" answers. This is what the table would look like if we took into account only "yes" and "no."

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| | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| 1984: "Do you think J. J. is anti-Semitic?" | 90% | 10% |
| 1988: "Is J. J. anti-Semitic?" | 84% | 16% |

The brightest and best kept assuring the Jews that whatever might have been true in the past, Jackson was now a fine fellow, guaranteed to grow ever finer. ("For he himself has said it,/ And it's greatly to his credit.") Norman Mailer had an op-ed piece in the New York *Times* on April 18 titled "Jackson Is a Friend of Life's Victims." Its boldface summary was "He may well turn out to be 'good for the Jews.' "

Jews nevertheless kept believing that Jackson was not good for the Jews. On April 15 they had seen *20/20* or on April 17 they had read about it in a Reuters dispatch:

> In a television interview that his presidential campaign said was intended to mend fences with Jews,. . . Mr. Jackson said that Mr. [Louis] Farrakhan had no involvement in his campaign and that there were no public dealings between the two of them. But when pressed about why he had not broken openly with him, Mr. Jackson said, "It's not necessary."

Some fence mending!

Three months later, still well before the election, Jews could read about some horrors in Jackson's home base of Chicago, where Steve Cokely, a stooge of Farrakhan's on the mayor's payroll, had made a speech about "doctors, especially Jewish doctors, who inject AIDS into blacks."* When Jews protested, Farrakhan said that that was because "the truth hurts." Jackson again decided that it wasn't necessary to repudiate Farrakhan or his anti-Semitism. He said that he had "spoken out against anti-Semitism" in Skokie, where neo-Nazis had defaced a synagogue with swastikas. (White anti-Semites yes, Farrakhan no.) The reporters' questions seemed to annoy him. "I don't see anyone holding press conferences condemning Koch," he said. In other words: if you ask me to condemn the anti-Semite, then in all fairness you should condemn the anti-anti-Semite.

Because in Democratic primaries Jews are such a high proportion of white voters, and especially of liberals, the contrast between Jews and others is understated in the following figures, taken from the New York *Times*, June 9 and 13, 1988:

JACKSON VOTE IN 1988 DEMOCRATIC PRIMARIES

| | All primaries | California | New Jersey |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 29% | 35% | 33% |
| Blacks | 92% | 93% | 96% |
| Whites | 12% | 25% | 9% |
| Liberals | 41% | 50% | 46% |
| Jews | 8% | 14% | 4% |

Non-Jewish liberals saw no impediment to voting for Jackson more than for Dukakis, and for once Jews did not go along with them. (In California one of every seven Jews voting in the Democratic primary did vote for Jackson.)

The bad news is how the Jews in Cohen's 1988 survey, mostly convinced that Jackson was an anti-Semite, nevertheless answered another question: "If Jesse Jackson is the Democratic vice-presidential candidate, which of the major parties will you probably vote for in the 1988 presidential election?"

"IF JACKSON IS THE DEMOCRATIC VICE-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. . . ."

| | Rep. | Dem. | Don't know | Won't vote |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Will probably vote | 44% | 25% | 30% | 2% |

Fewer than half said they would vote against a Democratic vice-presidential candidate whom most held to be an anti-Semite! A quarter said that they would probably vote Democratic anyway. A third said either that they did not know how they would vote then, or that they would confront the danger by not voting.

Ignoring the "don't know" and "won't vote" percentages, we get this:

| | Rep. | Dem. |
|---|---|---|
| Will probably vote | 64% | 36% |

All that education must have addled their faculties.

## IV

Those who do not remember World War II and the preceding years find it hard to understand what American Jews did—or, as the accusation goes—did not do to help the Jews of Europe. Why was the protest not louder, why was the pressure on Washington so feeble? The questions, and above all the spirit in which they are often asked, can smack a bit of anachronism and self-righteousness. America then was not what America is now, nor were American Jews then what they are now. Now protest of any kind is immeasurably easier than then, anti-Semitism—at least until recently—more shamefaced and on the defensive, and Jews stronger and more self-confident. That is what I have occasionally told young researchers.

Forty or fifty years from now, what explanation is a puzzled young researcher likely to hear when he asks about Jesse Jackson and the Jews in the final years of the 20th century?

* See Joseph Epstein's article, "Racial Perversity in Chicago," COMMENTARY, December 1988.

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One can imagine how the puzzlement would be phrased:

"Looking back, Jews can agree on the big changes after the war: Israel and the discrediting of anti-Semitism. Particularly in the United States anti-Semitism became almost taboo, in public life if not entirely in private life. Even non-anti-Semitism was no longer good enough. Historians had found that in Weimar Germany it was not only anti-Semites who voted Nazi. Non-anti-Semites could vote Nazi too, because for them Nazi anti-Semitism was not a weighty enough reason to avoid voting for a party they thought was right about the really *important* issues. Only anti-anti-Semites could be depended on not to vote Nazi, however attractive the Nazis' positions might otherwise be. The moral for America was that public life here had to be anti-anti-Semitic.

"Racism also became taboo. In the 20's the Ku Klux Klan was a power in the land, controlling entire legislatures. In 1980, in San Diego, when a Democratic primary nominated a KKK big shot to run for Congress, the state Democratic party urged all Democrats to vote for the Republican. The Democratic leaders would no doubt also have advised Democrats not to vote for a Democratic nominee who, though possibly not himself a card-carrying KKK-er, had a history of close personal ties to a kleagle, which the candidate said 'it's not necessary' to break.

"Why wasn't Jackson given the same treatment? Why didn't the Jews insist? Didn't they realize that the Democratic party's coddling of Jackson amounted to regression from anti-anti-Semitism to non-anti-Semitism? They voted as if Jackson had not happened, and they kept giving the same hugely disproportionate share of the Democratic party's $100,000 contributions. In effect, weren't they ratifying the substitution of non-anti-Semitism for anti-anti-Semitism?"

I will not be here forty or fifty years from now, unhappy at having such questions asked of me. I would be unhappy now if someone were to ask them of me. I think I still know American Jews. I used to think I understood them as well. Now I am not so sure.

The calculus is simple. You are a Jewish voter who on the question of abortion, say, loves "freedom of choice" and detests "right to life." But since these engage the convictions and passions of every voter, the 4 percent of votes cast by Jews will hardly determine which of the two, and which of the two candidates with opposing views on abortion, will carry the day.

That is not how it is with anti-anti-Semitism vs. non-anti-Semitism. In principle that too should be the concern of all; in fact it is the concern of Jews. Jews can do much more about it than about abortion. A Jewish vote cast to deal with non-anti-Semitism vs. anti-anti-Semitism would therefore be vastly more effective than one cast to deal with abortion. That would be the normally Democratic vote transferred to the Republicans in order to show the Democratic party how much its passage from anti-anti-Semitism to non-anti-Semitism cost it by the defection of traditional supporters, and how much it stood to gain from a return to anti-anti-Semitism.

Simple as the calculus is, it was too much for the educated Jews of America. Though non-Jewish voters did not have that in mind, to some degree they did for the Jews what Jews were too besotted to do for themselves. Some Democratic post-mortems have not overlooked the wariness of white voters generally about Jackson's power. The singular accomplishment of the Jews is that such post-mortems cannot also list fewer votes by Jewish voters and less money from Jewish contributors.

Rabbi Hamnuna the younger introduced into the Yom Kippur liturgy Rava's prayer for remission of sins "but not through grievous affliction." When American Jews throw off the yoke of habit, may it not be through grievous affliction.

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# Apocalypse Again

*Peter Shaw*

Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
—Robert Frost

Predictions of the end of the world, as old as human history itself and lately a subject of scholarly inquiry, have by no means abated in our own time. Nor are those who believe in such predictions confined to isolated religious sects, as was the case as recently as the 19th century. While such sects do continue regularly to spring up and disappear, predictions of catastrophe have become the virtual orthodoxy of society as a whole. Journalists, educators, churchmen, and philosophers daily endorse one or another script foretelling the end of individual life, of human civilization, or of the entire earth. Some say the world will end in fire—through the conflagration of a nuclear holocaust; some say in ice—through the same event, this time precipitating a "nuclear winter."

Fire and ice. We need only add earth and air to include within the apocalyptic genre all four of the elements understood as basic by the Greeks, and water to include the biblical account of the flood. Contemporary prophecies of flood are stated in apparently scientific terms: as a result of global warming, the polar ice caps will melt and inundate the world's major cities. As for earth and air, we anticipate the disappearance of the one thanks to the erosion of farmland and shorelines, while the other is to be depleted of its ozone, if not first saturated with carbon dioxide or poisoned by man-made pollutants.

Pagan man projected his fears outward; contemporary man internalizes. Like biblical man (at least to that very limited extent) he holds himself, or more accurately his own society, responsible for the coming end of the world. Not only the disaster allegedly threatened by pollutants but every prospective modern apocalypse stipulates man rather than the gods or nature as the primal cause. And the charge is always the same: whether it is to be by fire or by ice, mankind faces extinction as a punishment for its impiety.

The continuities and discontinuities between ancient and modern imaginations of disaster would amount to no more than curiosities if it were the case that superstitious fears had been replaced by rational ones. But it is not the case. On the contrary, given the best scientific understanding of reality available to early man, it made sense for him to ascribe natural disasters, present and future, to the gods. Later, it made sense for the Greeks to ascribe such disasters to some wayward or even malign characteristic of matter itself. Nor was Empedocles a simpleton for regarding the personification of the elements by gods as a persuasive account of reality. Would that our own conceptions of apocalypse were similarly founded on the best available scientific understanding. Instead, most if not all of the disasters currently being predicted have gained widespread credence *despite* a lack of scientific basis, or even in the face of definitive counterevidence.

Without question the most spectacular example of such a wholly suppositious theory has to do with the so-called greenhouse effect. The greenhouse effect itself, as every schoolchild knows, is simply the process by which the earth's atmosphere traps enough heat from the sun to create a habitable planet. As for the disaster scenario that bears the same name, it posits, in the words of a New York *Times* editorial, an increased "warming of the atmosphere by waste gases from a century of industrial activity." The *Times* goes on:

> The greenhouse theory holds that certain waste gases let in sunlight but trap heat, which otherwise would escape into space. Carbon dioxide has been steadily building up through the burning of coal and oil—and because forests, which absorb the gas, are fast being destroyed.

Now, aside from the mistaken assumption that forests worldwide are decreasing in size (they are not), the theory of a runaway greenhouse effect, otherwise known as global warming, presents even its advocates with a variety of internal contradictions. In the first place, the earth has a number of mechanisms for ameliorating fluctuations in global temperature: a significant rise in temperature, for example, leads to increased evaporation from the oceans; this is followed by the formation of clouds that shield the sun and then by a compensating drop in temperature. Too, if the greenhouse theory were valid, a global warming trend should be observable in records of temperatures soon after the jump in man-made carbon dioxide that is the result of modern industrial activity. Yet if there has been such a rise over the past one hundred years, it does not follow but precedes the onset of modern industrialism, and anyway it amounts to a barely detectable change of no more than one degree Fahrenheit over the entire period.

Here is a particularly significant problem for any hypothesis—the lack of evidence. Purveyors of the global-warming theory counter it by pointing to computer projections which show a catastrophic upward trend in the *next* century. Once again, however, a knotty problem presents itself: computer models, writes Andrew R. Solow, a statistician at Woods Hole

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Peter Shaw's *new book of essays,* The War Against the Intellect: Episodes in the Decline of Discourse, *will be published later this month by the University of Iowa Press.*



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Oceanographic Institution, "have a hard time reproducing current climate from current data. They cannot be expected to predict future climate with any precision."

DOES any of this detract from the persuasive power of the global-warming theory? Apparently not. As in certain forms of religion, the less evidence, the more faith. And in the resultant climate of belief (as it deserves to be called), not only the lack of evidence but even outright counterevidence can work to a theory's benefit. According to the late Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken, and Stanley Schachter, the authors of the classic study, *When Prophecy Fails* (1956), "Although there is a limit beyond which belief will not stand disconfirmation, it is clear that the introduction of contrary evidence can serve to increase the conviction and enthusiasm of a believer." So it has been during the most recent phase of prediction, which itself represents a revival of the great irruption of ecological warnings that dominated the early 1970's.

The central document in that earlier wave was *Limits to Growth*, a report issued by the Club of Rome in 1972 foretelling a worldwide doom brought on by the combined forces of "resource depletion," overpopulation, pollution, and starvation. The future conjured up by computer simulation in *Limits to Growth* bore a certain resemblance to the still more spectacularly stated predictions of Paul Ehrlich in his 1968 book, *Population Bomb*. Ehrlich had offered specific dates for specific catastrophes: 1983, for example, would see a precipitous decline in American harvests and the institution of food rationing, by which time a billion people worldwide would have already starved to death. The Club of Rome, more cautiously, assigned likely years for the exhaustion of specific resources: petroleum (1992), silver (1985), natural gas (1994), mercury (1985), tin (1987).

In 1982 one of the authors of the Club of Rome report had to admit that his predictions were not coming true. Yet he was not repentant. There may have been a postponement, a temporary reprieve, but man and the earth still remained poised on the brink of cataclysm. Presumably Paul Ehrlich, who never recanted, felt the same way. Just so have members of religious sects always responded when their confidently predicted apocalypses pass without incident.

True, the general public and even some members of the sect begin to fall away after such disappointments; in our time, both Paul Ehrlich and the Club of Rome did fade out of the spotlight. But instructively, and in contrast to the sects studied in *When Prophecy Fails*, they did so without having been exposed to the full glare of adverse publicity and ridicule that used to attend the collapse of prophecy. Perhaps that is why so little time elapsed before the public could be brought to credit similar predictions.

FOR even as the "population bomb" failed to explode on schedule, or ecological disaster to strike, new predictions of not only global but galactic proportions were being prepared. By the late 1980's these were receiving the same respectful, credulous hearing as their forerunners, and were being promoted just as avidly by the press. In the case of nuclear winter, the most publicized apocalypse, the cycle from prediction to publicity to disconfirmation took only a few years, from approximately 1985 to 1988; yet once again the end came without bringing ridicule or discredit to the theoreticians.

Nuclear winter was at once a prediction of what would happen after a nuclear war and the claim that an identical disaster, never detected in the geological record, had already taken place once before, in the age of the dinosaurs. A giant explosion, the theory went, had been caused on earth by a "nemesis" or "death star" wheeling in from far out in the universe and returning so quickly whence it had come as to be invisible to the most far-seeing of modern telescopes. The clouds of dust kicked up by that explosion had shielded the sun and thus caused the earth's vegetation to wither, bringing about the extinction of the dinosaurs by cold and starvation. The lesson for the mid-1980's was clear: intermediate-range nuclear missiles should not be emplaced in Western Europe and disarmament should commence forthwith.

As chance would have it, not long after the nuclear-winter theory gained currency there was a giant volcanic eruption at Mount St. Helens in the state of Washington. It was followed by the spreading of just such dark clouds as had been described—but without any hint of the predicted effect on vegetation or climate. At about the same time, too, paleontologists demonstrated that the dinosaurs could not possibly have been the casualties of a single, catastrophic event, since they had disappeared over a period of some thousands of years. Finally, a check of some of the nuclear-winter projections exposed gaping errors of math and physics.

As a result of these and other refutations of the theory, nuclear winter died its own death-by-theoretical-starvation. But so quickly was its place taken by similar predictions, similarly linked to geopolitical issues, that the event seems to have almost entirely escaped notice. Nuclear winter remains today in the public mind as a proven hypothesis, vying for popularity with its mirror opposite, the greenhouse effect.

Actually, not so long ago (as the journalist John Chamberlain has pointed out) we were being assured that we were living not in a warming but in a "cooling world." In the 1970's, as *Science* magazine reported in 1975, meteorologists were "almost unanimous" that such a trend was taking place, and that its consequences, especially for agriculture, were potentially disastrous. Climatologists, according to *Fortune* magazine, warned that the cooling trend "could bring massive tragedies for mankind." A decade later, all of this quite forgotten, the opposite theory of global warming has drifted past the rocks of evidentiary lack, tumbled safely through the falls of skepticism, and sailed triumphantly onto the smooth lake of public respect.

The status of global warming as

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an unassailable, self-evident truth was recently confirmed by the reaction to a scientific report that challenges its assumptions. This report, compiled at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and duly described on the front page of the New York *Times* and other newspapers, traces U.S. temperatures since 1895. It shows that the putative one-degree rise in temperature worldwide over the past hundred years, a figure widely accepted even by many of those skeptical of the global-warming scenario, is wrong for the United States. As the *Times* headline put it: "U.S. Data Since 1895 Fail to Show Warming Trend."

The reaction was immediate. All of the experts consulted by the *Times* were in agreement that the report does not set back the global-warming theory by so much as an iota. Prominent among these experts was Dr. James E. Hansen, director of the National Aeronautic and Space Administration's Institute for Space Studies in Manhattan, a leading proponent of global warming and the man who produced the data showing a one-degree rise in global temperature. "We have to be careful about interpreting things like this," he warned, and went on to explain that the United States covers only a small portion of the earth's surface. Besides, the steadiness of the temperature readings could be a "statistical fluke." Note the implicit distinction here: we must be "careful" in interpreting data that appear reassuring, but it is virtually our duty to indulge any strongly felt premonitions of disaster even if they are based on the flimsiest evidence, or none.

The concept of the "statistical fluke" could easily be applied to many current predictions, but is not. Thus, the acidification of a number of fresh-water lakes in the eastern United States is considered not a fluke but a definite trend, even though it might be taken to fall well within the range of natural fluctuations. Similarly, the disturbing deaths of numerous dolphins during the summer of 1988 were traced to the same pattern of human depredation of the environment supposed to be causing acid rain and other ecological catastrophes. Later, it developed that the dolphins were killed by a so-called "red tide" of algae—itself first seen as a man-created scourge but then conceded to be a natural phenomenon. Here, in other words, was a genuine statistical fluke; but it was never labeled as such since it exonerated industrial man.

It does not give pause either to the catastrophists or to their credulous promoters in the media that some predictions cancel out others. Dr. Hansen, for example, suggests that the absence of a warming trend, as shown by the new study, might be "the result of atmospheric pollutants reflecting heat away from earth." Yet these are the same pollutant particles supposedly responsible for global warming in the first place. Now it develops that the particles they carry with them counter the greenhouse effect. In fact, Dr. Hansen is worried that "anti-pollution efforts are reducing the amount of these particles and thus reducing the reflection of heat" away from the earth. It is surely a measure of the power of catastrophic thinking that what may have been the first public revelation of an actual decrease in man-made atmospheric pollutants should prompt the fear that such a decrease itself portends the direst consequences.

WHAT all this suggests is that we have come to depend at any given moment on a constant degree of threat. When times are bad—because of war, depression, or real natural disasters—proximate fears tend to dominate the imagination. When times are good—through the conquest of disease and famine, the achievement of high employment, prosperity, and an upward curve of longevity—apprehension has to be supplied from without. And during extended good times, a supply of fresh disasters is required as each one comes progressively to lose its appeal. Air pollution, rising to disaster proportions in the Club of Rome report, declines in importance but is soon succeeded by loss of the ozone layer, which will supposedly leave mankind vulnerable to the unfiltered rays of the sun and a consequent plague of, among other things, skin cancers and blindness. Continent-wide poisoning of fresh water through the eutrophication of lakes and streams from fertilizer runoff is forgotten only to be replaced by the threat of acid rain. Direct incineration of all mankind by atomic war cedes to a secondary stage of destruction by nuclear winter, and nuclear winter in turn to global warming.

This persistent and insistent imagining of disaster might be no more than a sideshow were it not for its political dimension. But in the 1970's and 80's, successive waves of catastrophism followed and reflected episodes of defeat for radical political movements. The 70's wave succeeded the collapse of the New Left and engaged many of that movement's disillusioned supporters (as well, of course, as many people opposed or indifferent to the New Left). That of the 80's followed the worldwide discrediting of the economic, political, and moral record of Communism. It was as if sanguine hopes of an end to the cold war required a compensatory new fear, one that natural catastrophe alone could supply. And thus, soon after James Baker's nomination as Secretary of State, a bipartisan memorandum from members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee called his urgent attention to the leading foreign-policy issue he would have to face, a "global problem of unprecedented magnitude." The issue was global warming.

It goes without saying that clean air and water, the retention of farmland and forests, a satisfactory ozone layer, and the avoidance of nuclear war are all desirable things. But the pursuit of these goals through the rhetoric of hellfire renders more immediate political concerns mundane and secondary. Many are the societies that have been distracted from the actual dangers they faced by the allure of disasters wholly imaginary. That consideration aside, though, our obsession with distant and unprovable catastrophe is so stultifying, from both the moral and the intellectual point of view, as to constitute a cultural disaster in its own right.

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# A New Look at Prokofiev

*Samuel Lipman*

THERE have been three great modern Russian composers: Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971), Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975), and Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953).[1] In an important sense, each member of this trio is musically defined by his physical relation to the land of his birth. Stravinsky, resident in France at the time of World War I, chose not to return to Russia after the October Revolution of 1917; he was to go back only once, for a short and not entirely satisfactory visit in 1962. As for Shostakovich, he was Stravinsky's opposite in the matter of residence as in so much else; he remained in Russia his entire life, save for a number of visits abroad carefully calculated by his Soviet masters to enhance the prestige of Soviet art. Prokofiev, finally, lived as an adult both in his own country and abroad, spending the 1920's and much of the 1930's in Europe and America, then returning home as the Great Purge reached its height, and remaining there until his death less than one hour before that of the infamous Josef Stalin.

As the world saw them, these three composers were publicly very different. Stravinsky, born of upper-class stock and long associated with the equally upper-class balletomane Serge Diaghilev, was resolutely anti-Bolshevik. Shostakovich, dubbed by many an artistic child of the Revolution, seemed almost until the very end of his life a loyal and cooperative Bolshevik, even in the face of withering criticism of his music by Stalin's multitudinous cultural henchmen before and after World War II. Prokofiev, in contrast to both Stravinsky and Shostakovich, took no interest or part in politics. Like Shostakovich, he was forced to toe the Communist aesthetic line, not only in order to continue working but in order to continue living; also like Shostakovich, he saw his associates imprisoned and in some cases executed. Unlike Shostakovich, Prokofiev was personally touched by the terror, when his estranged wife, the mother of his two sons, was arrested in 1948 and taken off to a camp from which she was not released until 1956.

Musically, as far as Stravinsky is concerned, the verdict of history is clear: three great ballets for Diaghilev, culminating in the primitivist *The Rite of Spring* (1913); a group of hauntingly lovely neoclassic works, the best of which are the oratorio *Oedipus Rex* (1927) and the ballet *Apollo* (1928); a number of astringent works written in American exile, ending with the opera *The Rake's Progress* (1951); and finally, in the last two decades of his life, a startling appropriation of twelve-tone technique, resulting in some very dry music and much flattering critical discussion. Overall, thanks to Robert Craft and others, Stravinsky remains in death what he was in life: the most written-about composer of the 20th century.

With Shostakovich the verdict, though only recently arrived at, is also reasonably clear: fifteen important and public symphonies, most of them projected on a very large canvas, divided—after the youthfully shocking First Symphony (1924-25)—between bathetic but popular pro-Soviet works like the Fifth (1937) and the Seventh (1941) on the one hand and courageous moral outbursts like the Thirteenth ("Babi Yar," 1962) and the Fourteenth (1969) on the other; fifteen beautiful and intensely private string quartets written between 1935 and 1974; a large number of other chamber works; several concertos; many film scores; and a brutally realistic opera, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (1934), known in the version revised after much political pressure as *Katerina Ismaylova* (1962). Overall, Shostakovich has managed, through the posthumous publication of seemingly authentic memoirs, to transform his image in death from what had appeared to be that of a Soviet hero to that of a martyr equaled in dissidence perhaps only by Solzhenitsyn.

There is no such clear verdict on Sergei Prokofiev. He began his career at the end of the first decade of this century as a shocking pianist performing his own shocking compositions. The *enfant terrible* first of the St. Petersburg Conservatory and then of Russian musical life in general, with his dissonantal, rigidly motoric music and similarly hard-edged pianism, he divided sophisticated concert audiences into violent supporters and equally violent detractors. When he began his exile from the Bolshevik Revolution in 1918, he continued abroad the reputation for provocation he had done so much to earn at home. But by the end of his life in 1953, Prokofiev, sick and increasingly feeble, had become a Soviet composer, finally forgiven for the crime of having lived abroad and, despite a crushing 1948 attack on him for formalism—i.e., placing private considerations of style and structure ahead of easy accessibility to a mass audience—honored with several much-coveted Stalin Prizes.

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[1] I have previously written in COMMENTARY on Stravinsky (July 1978) and Shostakovich (November 1982); the Stravinsky article was reprinted in my *Music After Modernism* (1979) and the Shostakovich article in *The House of Music* (1984).



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PROKOFIEV'S work may be divided into three periods: Russian, exilic, and Soviet. Always facile, he composed a huge amount of music, of which perhaps half was written prior to his return to the Soviet Union in the mid-1930's; of this first half, half again was written in his self-imposed exile after the Revolution. Altogether, in a compositional career stretching over a half-century, he completed seven symphonies, seven operas, seven ballets, four scores for dramatic productions, six film scores, five piano concertos, two violin concertos, two cello concertos, two string quartets, nine piano sonatas, two violin sonatas, a cello sonata, a host of songs, much solo piano music, and assorted orchestral, choral, and instrumental works.

Not surprisingly, the piano works of Prokofiev's Russian period, which were responsible for his early reputation, are no longer shocking. Instead, they now seem by turns flippant and sentimental. Two short dissonantal works, *Suggestion diabolique* (1908-12) and *Toccata* (1912), have become virtuoso showpieces beloved of hard-driving pianists; they were especially popular a generation ago, at least in this country, with young pianists anxious to profit from the public regard for Vladimir Horowitz's clangorous tone.[2] *Visions fugitives* (1915-17), twenty wistful and spicy keyboard miniatures, are very much more tuneful and refined, though hardly more memorable as musical thought. The four piano sonatas that date from this period do no more than replicate the mixture of cynicism and emotionality on a larger scale; the best of them, and the only one heard often today, is the Sonata no. 3 (composed 1907, revised 1917): short, sweet, and brilliant, it smacks of a greatly talented conservatory student showing off all his tricks upon graduation. The composer's first two piano concertos, the earlier written in 1911-12 and the latter in 1912-13 but revised in 1923, make the same impression with still greater presumption; indeed, it was through his playing of the Concerto no. 1 in a public contest that Prokofiev beat his fellow students and emerged in 1914 as the best pianist at the St. Petersburg Conservatory.

Prokofiev's orchestral compositions during this time, though much talked about in their day, now seem hardly more consequential. The *Scythian Suite* (1914-15), drawn from an unproduced ballet written at the suggestion of Diaghilev, bears a too-close resemblance to Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, while *The Buffoon* (composed for Diaghilev as a ballet in 1915, but now known in its 1922 orchestral version) openly reverts in style and mood to Stravinsky's preceding triumph, *Petrushka* (1911). The Symphony no. 1 (1916-17), subtitled "Classical," stems from a then-common desire to abandon the lushness of 19th-century romanticism in favor of 18th-century clarity; but in contrast to the gravity of Richard Strauss's earlier *Ariadne auf Naxos* (1911) and Stravinsky's later *Pulcinella* (1920), Prokofiev's classicizing can easily strike a listener today as mere fussiness. One work of this period, the Violin Concerto no. 1 (1916-17), seems less trivial and, in parts, genuinely melodic; but though very much in the soloist's repertory today, it too makes an overall impression of scrappiness.[3]

PROKOFIEV'S first important work outside Russia, though conceived there, was the opera *The Love for Three Oranges* (1918-21). This setting (with the composer's own libretto) of Gozzi's 18th-century parody of Chari and Goldoni was a venture into the vein of the *commedia dell'arte* so dear to Strauss and Stravinsky; more successful on its first performance in Chicago than elsewhere thereafter, it has won some popularity in the post-1945 Western operatic repertory, and in this country the famous March from Act II even became (in supposedly McCarthyite America!) the theme music of the smash radio program, "The FBI in Peace and War."

For Prokofiev, exile after 1918 meant not just composing but earning a living by giving regular piano concerts. For an appearance with Frederick Stock and the Chicago Symphony at the time of the premiere of *The Love for Three Oranges*, he completed his Piano Concerto no. 3 (1917-21). This was to prove his finest work to date, and to become one of the most popular 20th-century piano concertos. Though the many extended fast sections still suffer from Prokofiev's tendency to athletic bustle in the place of inner vitality, each of the work's three movements contains passages of long-lined lyricism; the concluding movement in particular is marked by perhaps the first appearance of what was to become a typical Prokofiev grand melody, chaste and pure, rich in timbre but lean in harmonization.[4]

We learn from Harlow Robinson's recent biography of the composer[5] that in 1924 the increasingly successful émigré conductor Serge Koussevitzky, about to take over the Boston Symphony Orchestra, suggested that Prokofiev make a "hit" of the symphony he was then writing. But Prokofiev's Symphony no. 2, premiered by Koussevitzky in Paris the next year, was a meandering and harsh work, lightened only by

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[2] Horowitz's 1947 recording of the *Toccata* is a fitting monument both to the great pianist and to the entire era of supercharged pianism, now gone, which he exemplified. It is available (or, given the current obsolescence of the LP disc, said to be available) on RCA ARM 1-2717. Of even greater historical interest are Prokofiev's own less aggressive (though equally hard-edged) 1935 performances of the *Suggestion diabolique* and nine of the *Visions fugitives;* they were available in the 1960's, along with other examples of Prokofiev's playing of his own music, on Angel COLH 34.

[3] A lovely, dreamy performance of this work by the Russian virtuoso David Oistrakh, recorded (I assume) in the Soviet Union in the mid-1950's, was available many years ago on Westminster XWN 18178. A much more compelling and communicative recording was done as long ago as 1935 by the great Hungarian violinist Joseph Szigeti, accompanied by the redoubtable Sir Thomas Beecham; it was last available in the 1970's on the very choice Szigeti eightieth-birthday album, CBS M6X 31513.

[4] Prokofiev's own surprisingly limpid 1932 performance of the Concerto no. 3, made in London with conductor Piero Coppola, is to be found on Angel COLH 34, a disc I have mentioned above. My own favorite recording of this work was made in the late 1940's by the much-lamented American pianist William Kappell (1922-53); it is now available on LP as RCA AGM1-5266, and on cassette as AGK1-5266.

[5] *Sergei Prokofiev: A Biography*, Viking (1987), 573 pp., $29.95. Paperback: Paragon House Publishers (1988), $12.95.

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the lovely, Ravel-like opening of its second (and final) movement. The work did not please the modernist cognoscenti, but it was well received in the Soviet Union, where the first signs were beginning to appear of what was later to become a beguiling welcome mat for Prokofiev.

There were other portents as well of artistic rapprochement with Russia's new masters. The formerly arch-anti-Bolshevik Diaghilev commissioned from Prokofiev a "Soviet" ballet, *Le Pas d'acier* (1925-26); the title is usually translated as "The Steel Step." This dry and unappealing work is a Paris-hatched evocation of Communist mechanization and industrialization. Initially the work was successful in Paris but was ill-received in the Soviet Union, where Prokofiev, Robinson tells us, was accused of a "distorted view of Soviet reality"; evidently the commissars did not relish praise from the effete Diaghilev and his coterie.

ANOTHER of Prokofiev's misfires at this time was *The Flaming Angel* (1919-27), an opera of female sexual obsession, based on a novel by the Russian symbolist Valery Bryusov. In this tense and brittle work, Prokofiev was so concerned with setting speech to musical accompaniment that he seems to have minimized any melodic expression for the voices. Despite his best efforts, the opera was not staged until 1955, and then only in Venice. In a valuable article on Prokofiev's operas,[6] George Martin asserts that *The Flaming Angel* demonstrates "much the same kind of power" as Strauss's *Elektra* (1906-08). Yet such a comparison surely understates the power of the extended outbursts of onrushing song which mark the latter part of *Elektra;* all of Strauss's dissonances—and here they are indeed more daring than those of Prokofiev—are integrated and redeemed by an even more daring lyrical passion. It was precisely this ultimate balancing of cacophony with melody, of harmonic disorder with order, which the Strauss of *Elektra* accomplished, and which the Prokofiev of *The Flaming Angel,* despite an attempt at song toward the end, could not manage.

Prokofiev did use much material from *The Flaming Angel* in his Symphony no. 3 (1928). Here the prevailing sound is harsh and heavy, and the symphony is today rarely played. But in fact Prokofiev's aesthetic was now beginning to change; the lyrical and combative elements which made up his musical personality were coming into equilibrium. An important token of this development was the tuneful and sometimes even romantic *L'Enfant prodigue* (1929), Diaghilev's last production before his death the same year. Material from this new, more relaxed Prokofiev forms the basis of the Symphony no. 4 (1930). This very beautiful work has had a checkered history, and unfortunately has been known mainly in the composer's very much expanded 1947 revision, but in its original, highly concentrated form it seems the first fully realized example of the mature romantic classicism we associate with the best music of Prokofiev's Soviet period.

Another important work in these years when Prokofiev was going back and forth among the Soviet Union, Western Europe, and America is the Piano Concerto no. 4 (1931), written as a commission from the one-armed pianist Paul Wittgenstein, the brother of the famous philosopher. This four-movement work for the left hand alone, immensely hard and even unrewarding to play, was spurned by its dedicatee because of its difficulty, and then frowned upon in the Soviet Union, perhaps for its lack of programmatic content. As a result it lay unperformed until 1956, and is rarely played even today. Nevertheless, the work combines two brilliant outer movements with a chastely beautiful slow movement and a dramatic third movement; the slow movement in particular marks another step on the road to the fully mature Prokofiev. The same can hardly be said of the bright and beady—and more frequently played—Concerto no. 5 (1932), a work that in retrospect seems a last reversion to Prokofiev's early hyper-athletic manner.

As the decade of the 1930's progressed, Prokofiev was to spend more and more time in the land of his birth. Harlow Robinson makes it clear that despite the worsening political situation the Soviet Union had much to offer the now middle-aged composer. In the West, he had had to support himself and his family with constant piano appearances; in Russia he would be supported, as a composer, by the state. In the West he felt at the mercy of a small, inconstant, and complexity-loving audience captivated by the always-fashionable Stravinsky, a musical figure who both fascinated and repelled him; in Russia, he thought he had found a vast and eager public ready, because of its roots in pre-revolutionary Russian musical tradition, to support his new-found lyrical clarity. Robinson sums the matter up well: "Ultimately, it was [Prokofiev's] desire to compose in a more simple style that led him to return to the USSR."

DESPITE the horror of what was happening in Russia in the period after Prokofiev's return, it cannot be denied, I think, that he began to write his best music then. Thus in 1933, while in the Soviet Union, he composed the whimsically satirical score for the film *Lt. Kijé,* a work which has found a secure place in the orchestral repertory; in 1935 he wrote the very beautiful Violin Concerto no. 2, whose melodies grow more ravishing as each year passes; in 1936 he wrote the charming *Peter and the Wolf,* entrancing children all over the world while educating them about the instruments of the orchestra.

Finally, in 1935-38 he produced one of his most important scores, the ballet *Romeo and Juliet;* in a bow to his own past, Prokofiev included in this new work the well-known Gavotte from the "Classical" Symphony. The long score of *Romeo and Juliet,* powerful in its evocation of both communal conflict and the pathos of young love, is today known not just as a ballet but perhaps even better in the three orchestral suites which have been

[6] In his *The Opera Companion to Twentieth Century Opera* (1979).

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extracted from it.[7] Here, for the first time, Prokofiev was neither an *enfant terrible* nor a troubled genius struggling to find his own consistent voice; instead, he had become a master whose best works to come—and they were to be many—would bear the stamp of icy passion and refined athleticism.

YET this moment of artistic transcendence for Prokofiev—the moment, also, when he decided to reside permanently in the Soviet Union—was marked as well by the terror and exterminations of Stalin's purges. The murderous attention which this tyrant had been paying to the Russian peasantry was now extended to the army, the bureaucracy, and society as a whole. It was also extended to the arts. In music, the ax fell on Shostakovich in 1936 for his opera *Lady Macbeth*, successful on its premiere two years earlier, but now suddenly choked off because of Stalin's detestation of the licentious story and the frank musical treatment. Shostakovich's Symphony no. 4 (1935-36) was withdrawn, and only the appearance of the Symphony no. 5 (1937), subtitled "A Soviet Artist's Practical, Creative Reply to Just Criticism," restored him to the Stalinist book of life.

The dictator's chosen enemy was not simply particular pieces of music but any tendencies still remaining in Soviet society to look elsewhere than to the current definition of political orthodoxy for cultural nourishment and guidance. In practice, this meant a demand for musical happy endings, and a ban on any form of modernism and on any contemporary foreign influences.

The implications of such an artistic straitjacket for Prokofiev's music and even for his physical survival gradually became clear. He made public political statements, and he began to write what can only be called political nonce-works, starting off with a wretched *Cantata for the Twentieth Anniversary of the October Revolution* (1936-37); ironically, this piece of bombast did not do the job its creator intended, for it was not performed until 1966.[8] In the years before his death, Prokofiev was to write several such compositions, including the drinking song *Zdravitsa* (1939), usually translated as "Hail to Stalin"; the oratorio *On Guard for Peace* (1950); and the *Festive Poem—the Meeting of the Volga and the Don* (1951), written to celebrate the completion of yet another slave-labor project.

BUT the real Prokofiev, happily, is not to be found in any of these extorted potboilers. He is to be found, for example, in the Piano Sonatas nos. 6 through 8 that he began to sketch in 1939. All of them have gone into the international piano repertory, perhaps the last solo works—with the exception of the Sonata op. 26 (1949) by the American Samuel Barber—to do so. Of these three vital compositions, the most brilliant, the most moving, and curiously the shortest is the Sonata no. 7, completed in 1942.[9] This titantic work resounds in its outer movements with the sounds of the coming war, but in the glorious slow movement contains a manly tenderness that ennobles the surrounding struggle.

Prokofiev also continued to write for orchestra and the ballet. His Symphony no. 5 (1944), though very much a public work, now seems more authentic than Shostakovich's Symphony no. 7 (1941), subtitled "Leningrad." The ballet *Cinderella* (1940-44), still today very much in the shadow of *Romeo and Juliet*, is even finer than the earlier score in the purity and intensity of its melodic expression. Mention must be made, too, of the two massive film scores, *Alexander Nevsky* (1938) and *Ivan the Terrible* (1942-46), both written in close collaboration with the great director Sergei Eisenstein. Gripping as film accompaniment, these works maintain their life in the concert hall, though in both cases Prokofiev's own musical style is subordinated to the attempt to accommodate the historical, not to say mythic, Russian subject matter; in any event, this music is the high-water mark of the composer's achievement as a Soviet patriot.

Throughout his life, Prokofiev was committed to operatic composition. As an aspect of his accommodation to the political climate at the end of the 1930's he wrote *Semyon Kotko* (1940), based on a story combining post-1917 events in the Ukraine with a traditional boy-meets-girl, boy-wins-girl plot; although the political libretto could not have been more orthodox, or the musical treatment more lyrical, the conflicted political atmosphere of the Hitler-Stalin Pact seems to have doomed the work on its premiere, and it remains neglected.

Prokofiev made one further operatic attempt to please his masters: the *Story of a Real Man* (1948), based on the best-selling novel of Boris Polevoi about a wounded Russian flyer who returns to combat after his legs are amputated. In the music for this, his last opera, Prokofiev combined cinematic techniques of short scenes and rapid alternations of mood with traditional operatic forms of aria and duet, and even introduced evocations of popular dance music. Once again, however, he failed to please his masters, and the work was not performed for the first time until 1960; since then it has become a regular part of the repertory in Moscow.

More important by far, however, is *War and Peace*, which the composer worked on from 1941 until the year before his death, in spite

[7] Connoisseurs of historical recordings will be interested to know of Prokofiev's own 1938 performance of the Suite no. 2 from *Romeo and Juliet*, now available on a Philips CD (420778-2), and his mentor Koussevitzky's extraordinary 1945 Boston performance of the same excerpts, recently available on an RCA Victrola LP (AVM1-2021).

[8] In this era of *glasnost* and *perestroika* it might be salutary to listen occasionally to such a token of the bad old days: the *Cantata* was recently available on a Melodiya/Angel recording (SR40129), coupled with another classic of the genre, Shostakovich's cantata celebrating the 35th anniversary of the 1917 Revolution, *The Sun Shines Over Our Motherland* (1952).

[9] The first American performance of each of these three Prokofiev sonatas was given during World War II by Vladimir Horowitz, who recorded no. 7 in 1950; the performance remains today the standard for the technical brilliance and the cold passion which the pianist, mirroring the composer, brings to the music. This epochal piece of piano-playing was included, along with an equally superlative performance of the Barber sonata, in the RCA LP album LD 7021, now deleted.

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of illness and the firestorm of Andrei Zhdanov's 1948 onslaught on musical life. In *War and Peace,* Prokofiev rests not on the quicksand of Soviet attitudes to current events but on the very core of Russian history, made into immortal literature by Tolstoy. From so immense a historical canvas, Prokofiev fashioned an enormous opera that in its original version threatened to require two evenings for its performance.

After a hugely successful 1946 production in Leningrad of the first half of the opera, Prokofiev made both extensive revisions and many—evidently too many—cuts. After the cuts were restored, the revised *War and Peace,* now brimming with expansive melodies and striding rhythms, was finally staged in Moscow in 1959. The work has never been produced in the United States by a major opera company; given the fact that *War and Peace* very possibly contains the strongest music, *qua* music, of any opera written since Strauss, such a staging, by one of our repertory-starved operatic behemoths, is long overdue.[10]

Prokofiev's compositional career—and his life—was rounded out by his final two symphonies and a remarkable work for cello and orchestra. The Symphony no. 6 (1945-47) was evidently to be more severe and introspective than its very outgoing predecessor; the late musicologist Boris Schwarz (in the 1983 second edition of his indispensable *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia*) correctly finds "the orchestral sound . . . harsh and metallic . . . the low brass instruments . . . often snarling . . . the high woodwinds shrill. . . ." But even here, the lovely slow movement, with its perhaps unintended reference to a theme from the American Howard Hanson's "Nordic" Symphony (1923), musically justifies the surrounding density. The quite different Symphony no. 7 (1951-52) seems to evoke the gentle and nostalgic sides of Paris in the 1920's; listening to the soaring opening movement of this work, one can only marvel at the capacity of the artist to find warmth in his imagination at a time when real life was unbearably bleak.

The same must be said of the *Sinfonia Concertante* (1950-52), a work brilliantly played the world over by Mstislav Rostropovich, for whom it was written. Here, in a tightly-packed piece of less than twenty minutes' duration, Prokofiev sums up the entire melodic and virtuoso tradition of the Russian solo concerto, a genre made famous by Tchaikowsky and Rachmaninoff, and to which Prokofiev himself contributed so much.

The ironies of Prokofiev's life are startling. A composer of genius grows up under conditions of relative artistic freedom; he leaves his revolution-ridden homeland to work in total freedom—but then writes his best music after intentionally deciding to incarcerate himself in the land of his birth, one of the most bloodthirsty tyrannies the world has ever known. Did Prokofiev behave in some sense culpably in writing music—beautiful and great music—under a dictator? Can it be true that despotism, rather than freedom, is peculiarly conducive to great art?

These are difficult questions to answer, for they go to the heart of the spiritual life of the 20th century. In the particular case of Prokofiev, it is essential to realize that we have little record of his politics, or of his wider activities outside music. Though he left behind a fascinating memoir of childhood and student days at the St. Petersburg Conservatory,[11] he wrote very little of a personal nature about his adult life; as Harlow Robinson has convincingly demonstrated, Prokofiev was a man of abrasive utterance but few explanations. Moreover, of those colleagues who may have known him intimately, few can have survived into happier times with their memories and energies intact.

In any case, unlike his younger colleague Shostakovich, who early on supported the Bolshevik Revolution and who served (under duress) as a Stalinist spokesman on well-publicized propaganda visits to Europe and the United States after World War II, Prokofiev confined his political acts to perfunctory statements and obligatory ceremonial compositions that were in no case successful. Given the conditions of the last years of Stalin's reign, Prokofiev's stubborn insistence on writing abstract symphonies in addition to the required program music speaks for his artistic courage, not for any craven capitulation.

It is also clear that Prokofiev's artistic turn away from the stridency and the flippancy associated with the hypertrophy of musical modernism occurred well before his return to the USSR, and that the roots of his best music lay in works he wrote while still in the West. In going back, was Prokofiev beguiled by the prospect of an adoring and receptive audience? Of course he was. But it is hardly peculiar to want to write for an approving audience. Furthermore, it would be wrong to overlook the close attachment of composers to their homelands; in general, it is difficult to separate the greatest music from the national circumstances under which it was written. The idea of Mother Russia, as important to Prokofiev as it is to Solzhenitsyn, was hardly invented by Stalin, exploit it though the dictator did in order to mobilize political sentiment.

So far as the creation of art under tyranny is concerned, we can hardly believe that any domination of man by man is so complete as to destroy all autonomous human experience, the nonpolitical as well as the political, the artistic as well as the social. Even under totalitarianism some kind of private experience persists, and so too, by im-

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[10] I am aware of two recordings of *War and Peace.* The first, a 1960 Soviet recording conducted by Alexander Melik-Pashayev and very likely made with the extraordinary cast (including Galina Vishnevskaya) of the 1959 Bolshoi staging, was available (with the usual execrable surfaces) as Melodiya MK 218 D; I have not heard the deleted Angel reissue of this performance. A new CD, recorded in Bulgaria and pressed in West Germany, is now available (with a libretto in English and French) as Fidelio 8801/3.

[11] *Prokofiev By Prokofiev,* edited by David H. Appel and translated by Guy Daniels (Doubleday, 1979).

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plication, does the life of the artistic imagination. Boris Pasternak conceived and wrote his novel *Dr. Zhivago* under the worst conditions of repression; in the more abstract and therefore more enclosed area of music, the individual expression of genius remained similarly possible.

TODAY, in our present era of perhaps exaggerated hopes for *glasnost* and *perestroika,* is there a risk that in praising works of art created under Stalin we may be offering an apology for, or even a defense of, past or future evil? There can be little doubt that present and future Soviet governments—and present and future Stalinists—will attempt to use Russian art and creativity to justify past actions and future plans. It is, after all, the fate of great art to be enlisted in every cause, good or bad. All the more necessary, then, to insist on the distance that separates art created by individuals, working within the matrix of a great people, from the crimes of sanguinary usurpers. Clearly the point is not that despotism is good for music, any more than the fate of the musical avant-garde in the West after World War II proves that political freedom is bad. The point, rather, is that any attempt to extract apodictic lessons about the creation of art from our knowledge of the political circumstances which surround it is to reduce artistic creativity to the level of a recipe, as if writing a symphony were like baking a cake. This, indeed, was Stalin's position; it need hardly be ours.

With Sergei Prokofiev, what we know is that there occurred in him that most fecund conjunction of an original artistic genius with an artistic tradition still alive in a large population. It is the business of critics, among others, to maintain such traditions; the genius comes from elsewhere and above.

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## Fiction

# The Brodkey Question

*Carol Iannone*

HAROLD BRODKEY is the kind of writer a critic loves to hate. Touted as a literary genius on the basis of a perennially unfinished novel and a handful of difficult-to-read *New Yorker* stories about his own traumatic childhood, he has been pushed down our throats like some obnoxious older cousin who has inexplicably garnered the admiration of the family elders. Add to this the image of a self-centered self-promoter, and a figure emerges who seems to epitomize everything inflated, false, and cliquish about literary politics.

But Brodkey cannot be dismissed so easily. If his achievement falls short of the master status ascribed to him by the likes of Harold Bloom, Denis Donoghue, and Gordon Lish, it is nevertheless substantial enough to prompt serious if qualified admiration. A hefty volume of his short stories from the last twenty-five years, *Stories in an Almost Classical Mode,** has recently been published, along with a reissue of his stories from the 50's, *First Love and Other Sorrows,*† making such an assessment possible.

The stories in Brodkey's earlier collection are tender, precise accounts of the everyday impingements of human love, the conflicted pain and confusion of individuals caught between self-expansion and self-absorption. The first entry, "The State of Grace" (distantly reminiscent of Henry James's "The Pupil"), fittingly sounds themes that will interest Brodkey in different ways throughout his career. The story's perceptively intelligent protagonist, a thirteen-year-old boy, babysits for another "precocious and delicate little boy, quivering with the malaise of being unloved." In the clever, amusing games that the older boy contrives for them to play together, the "child's heart would come into its own, and the troubled world where his vague hungers went unfed and mothers and fathers were dim and far away . . . would disappear." Yet no matter how much the younger boy longs for his love, the older, hardened in his own grievances, will not truly respond.

Brodkey weaves a gently wrenching story from this situation. We can feel the "sore spot" in the little boy's heart as well as the weight of

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* Knopf, 596 pp., $24.95.
† Vintage, 223 pp., $7.95 (paperback).

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"hurts and shynesses" that keep the teenager "fierce and solitary and acrid" in his real and imagined adolescent wounds. The story itself is told from a vantage point of years later, however, when those grievances and excuses have evaporated into an appreciation of the emotional stakes involved and an implicit recognition of the deception in requiring that one be loved on one's own terms before one loves at all.

But there are other ways as well to evade love, as Brodkey suggests in a more comic mood in "Sentimental Education," charmingly written in homage to Flaubert's great novel. Young Elgin Smith, a student at Harvard, believes that "only passionate people were worthwhile and that all other kinds were shallow"; he longs "to fall in love, to worship a girl and to put his life at her feet." When he meets the high-strung Caroline, they embark on a hearts-and-flowers affair, carrying on like the lovers in a film by Eric Rohmer. But they soon find themselves in over their heads, and grow disgruntled and perplexed. When Elgin rather portentously suggests the need to consider "the teleology of the thing," the thought of marriage and commitment proves too much for them. They part in relief but also, it seems, still in mutual delusion. Although the story is really a trifle, and one that wears thin, in its own way it effectively exposes the excesses of "romance" split off from the web of complexities that constitute ordinary life and the fullness of human character.

These two efforts are modest but interesting; the other stories in the early collection range from negligible to worthless. Brodkey must have traveled several artistic light years to arrive at the level of skill apparent in the first few entries in his new collection, which are much fuller and more layered than anything he had done before.

In these stories, dating from the 60's and early 70's, Brodkey continues to chart the illusions, delusions, and evasions of the heart. Perhaps the richest of them is "The Abundant Dreamer," which also examines the ambiguous function of the artistic process. Marcus Weill, a respected American Jewish film director, is on location in Rome when he hears of the death of Nanna, the doting grandmother who raised him after his parents' divorce. Absorbed in making a new movie, *Recontre du Voyage*, Marcus has no intention of being disturbed by "the news of Nanna's death or by the rearoused wonder at her meaning in his life." But through a series of flashbacks interwoven with present activity at the film location, the dimensions of Marcus's own emotional voyage delicately take shape.

It emerges that Marcus tries to gain in art the clarity, structure, and order that have evaded him in the unresolved conflicts of his life. Marcus has noticed disapprovingly that "we flee from logic and order because they remind us that we must die, while illogic and disorder soothe us by proving that nothing makes sense, that nothing is certain, not even death." As against this, Marcus insists to an interviewer that life *does* make sense when we take decisive control of it. But Brodkey's point seems to be that Marcus has achieved such a "sense" at the price of fully comprehending the intricacies of his own emotional life. Thus it is he who cannot confront the implications of Nanna's death, or, as a consequence, the imperfect but very real love she represented for him.

On its own terms, "The Abundant Dreamer" has its shortcomings, notably a sometimes maddening fuzziness of focus. But it is still quietly stirring and cumulatively evocative, made multidimensional by the moods and nuances that build around the plot.

Also effective, but in a more direct and less embroidered way, is "Bookkeeping," a skillful dissection of some of the liberal pieties of the 60's and the ways they work themselves into human relationships. One evening in his apartment, Avram Olensky finds himself negotiating uncomfortably between Louise, his cool and competent benefactress, who has come for a visit with her husband Ulrich, and Annetje, a disheveled acid-tripping friend in need of his emotional support. Louise is straightforwardly unsympathetic to Annetje's plight and repelled by what she sees as self-indulgence. Avram pleads for kindness toward Annetje, and openmindedness toward what is new and different, but we soon see how superficial is the catechism he professes, as when he defends the "spiritual bravery involved" in tripping, along with "people's *right* to ruin or expand their lives with drugs."

Although Avram spouts all the "correct" sentiments, the story suggests that he is no more willing or able really to touch and relieve Annetje's lonely befuddlement than the two colder-hearted types who do not even try. At the end, the story rather shrewdly exposes the moral "bookkeeping" of the liberal imagination as, mildly discomfited by the "spiritual coarse[ness]" he has sensed in himself, Avram restores his self-approval by determining to lecture Louise and Ulrich once again on the need for compassion.

A lesser but still interesting effort from the earlier entries in the new collection is "The Shooting Range," whose heroine wanders from Communism to psychoanalysis but in the end remains thoroughly baffled by the hidden currents and wellsprings of her existence. In "Hofstedt and Jean—and Others," a forty-five-year-old professor "slips into an affair with a twenty-year-old student" whom "he did not quite manage to love" because of his ongoing preoccupation with an old college friend. But despite their many rewards, these stories from the 60's and early 70's also have something vaguely unsatisfying about them, a frustrating waywardness that may or may not have something to do with the sexual reticence of the male characters.

Be that as it may, the next entry in the collection, the legendary "Innocence," represents a dynamic breakthrough for Brodkey in both content and form. Here, in this story of how the persistent Wiley Silenowicz brings the reluctant Orra Perkins to her first orgasm, a real human connection is finally,

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prodigiously, heroically made. In addition, Brodkey eschews here his earlier preoccupation with technical control in favor of a vivid, flowing immediacy of execution arising from the "authority," as he himself puts it in the story, "of being on one's knees in front of the event."

"Innocence" is one of the few examples in modern literature of the much fought-for right to sexual explicitness actually amounting to something. For all its length, the story is powerfully concentrated, and completely attentive to every nuance of the emotional, moral, and physical consequences of its central act of lovemaking. Through his two characters Brodkey deploys a full-bodied, almost Balanchine-like sense of sexual polarity, yet with none of the swaggering macho of Norman Mailer's "bullfighter" protagonist in "The Time of Her Time." Instead, the sexual act here becomes a matter of risk, devotion, integrity, sensibility, and soul, a shedding of false sophistication and self-regard, a breaking-down of postures and hesitancies in the name of a grateful, wordless, tearful intimacy, or "innocence." Although the writing is sometimes shockingly frank, "Innocence" proves the dictum of C.S. Lewis, of all people, that sexual intercourse properly and profoundly undertaken is inevitably a matter of love.

The breakthrough literary technique of "Innocence" was to become Brodkey's later trademark. Robert Alter has termed it "lyric sensationalism," a mode of writing in which plot and time are sacrificed to the pursuit of the sensual and affective actualities of experience. In one of the stories in Brodkey's first volume, a young wife mourns "the separateness of people." "I'll never know how much he loves me," she thinks of her husband. "I can only suggest it." "Lyric sensationalism" is Brodkey's way of breaking through that "separateness," of going beyond suggestion to explore and transcribe the depths of human connection. As a technique it is most successful in "Innocence" and in at least one other piece in the new collection, "Story in an Almost Classical Mode."

Like "Innocence," structured by the sexual act and its climax, this story too has a built-in "teleology"—which suggests that for all Brodkey's insistence on immediacy and actuality as an artistic credo, his gifts are still best served by some framework of irrevocable contingencies upon which he can layer the dense impasto of his prose. In any event, the structure of "Story in an Almost Classical Mode" is imposed by the progressive illness and death of the protagonist's mother. As in "Innocence," but of course with less happy results, a young man finds himself locked in a fatal functional intimacy with another's desperate need; here he learns to neutralize his mother's physical and emotional agony by tapping depths of sweetness and generosity in her that she hardly knew she possessed. Unfortunately, paradoxically, tragically almost, this intensive empathy is achieved at considerable cost to the young man's own inner stability. In delineating the shifts and subtleties of this relationship, the story is remarkable for the depth and transparency of its emotional landscape and the unflinching steadiness of its observations.

Most of the other late entries in the new collection are attempts to recapture Brodkey's childhood experiences of connection, attachment, cruelty, loss, and hurt, but they lack the direction and consequence evident in "Innocence" and "Story in an Almost Classical Mode." Whole lengthy stories, often spun from the consciousness of a small boy, are tediously devoted to the minutest intricacies of human exchange. Brodkey's "almost classical" powers of observation are always operative, but such moments of intimacy or insight as these stories yield never build or cohere or illumine in any important or abiding manner—as they do, by contrast, in the late Henry James, who can also be seen to be penetrating the fictional surface to probe the underlying geography of relationship. Furthermore, far from resisting the artificial constraints of time, logic, and order to render the intricacies of the affective life, Brodkey's later stories often make everything so obsessively conscious, so intimately and almost obscenely exposed, as to obliterate much of the wonder and beauty of the connection they assert.

In many of these pieces (intended, incidentally, to form parts of a gigantic novel, *Party of Animals*), Brodkey's refusal to sacrifice the spontaneity of lived experience to the norms of artistic restraint has betrayed him into practically relinquishing the power of the fictional act altogether. It therefore seems no accident that the last entry in the collection, "Angel," is hardly fiction at all but what appears to be some kind of attempt at post-biblical prophecy. The story has a certain haunting intensity as it purports to transmit the revelation of the "Angel of Silence and of Inspiration" that appeared "to a number of us passing by on the walk in front of Harvard Hall," but it finally turns out to be as aimless as most of Brodkey's family romances.

On the matter of his own Jewishness Brodkey has been accused of everything from hostility to indifference. It is true that he is not particularly concerned with Jewish ethnicity, or with Jewishness as a pretext for political radicalism. ("What's a Communist?" asks a minor character in an early story. "A man trying to act like a Jew without getting mixed up with God.") But in some ways Brodkey does take Judaism seriously as a spiritual vision, as "a great truth," to quote the young Marcus Weill in "The Abundant Dreamer." Instructs Rappaport, "a clever, militant Jew" in the same story: "A Jew is a kind of man who believes in God and believes that everything is a matter of religion. You can't hide or lie about it. No saints. No divine prophets. Just prophets, and they're not always right. You have the Ten Commandments. Money can't a be God. Art can't be a God. Only God is God."

Here, indeed, is one possible clue to what Brodkey may believe he is doing in his later work—smashing the graven idol of aestheticism. Art can't be a God. Unfortunately, the problems with many of these later stories is that Brodkey will not even

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let art be art; and in "Angel," it is not clear he will let God be God, either. In that story, Brodkey seems to identify Judaism with a pure abstract ideal—with "the absence of Pagan weight and detail and gloom and of Christian secular frivolity and sacred populism," and without "immediate access to the Divine . . . that once took *human* form." But then this great pure desert vision becomes something banal, middle-class, a "theology in a suburb." The angel, the narrator says,

> bade me love incomplete meanings and with my whole heart but only for a while. It told me to be fickle. . . . It said that only new positions are honest or possible but they ebb into old ones, into ghostliness and confusion. . . . It said that differences could not be escaped from, politics were inevitable, that political meaning is out of place in relation to real power, genuine beauty, true silence or speech, but they will occur then anyway. It said to abjure tyranny as much as possible and if that meant having many gods, do so, but to recognize that anarchy was weak. It said to love incomplete and complex meanings and One Speechless and apparently not Omnipotent God and to struggle toward a new idea of idea, therefore.

What kind of god is this? It sounds suspiciously like a rationale for the nemesis that drives Harold Brodkey, who can sometimes be so effective, to write story after story that goes nowhere.

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# Books in Review

## The Movement

PARTING THE WATERS: AMERICA IN THE KING YEARS 1954-63. By TAYLOR BRANCH. *Simon & Schuster. 1062 pp. $24.95.*

*Reviewed by* JOSHUA MURAVCHIK

THE United States is probably the most successful political experiment of all time, but it is not utopia. The greatest of its flaws and failings have been in the area of race. Ninety years of slavery followed by a century of Jim Crow mocked the principles on which the nation was founded. Slavery came close to bringing down the Republic, and the war to end slavery was the nation's most costly. As for Jim Crow, it damaged the spirit and harmed millions of citizens, but the costs of abolishing it were mercifully small.

For that we owe thanks to the civil-rights movement, one of history's great movements of social reform. It was a genuine "grassroots" movement of the oppressed, consisting in the main of poor, and poorly educated, Southern black churchgoers. The movement displayed exemplary courage in the face of murderous mobs and brutal police officers, and exemplary fidelity to its self-imposed discipline of nonviolence. For its leaders, nonviolence was a matter of philosophical or religious conviction, but nonviolence also proved to be a brilliant tactic—so brilliant, in fact, that only a decade passed from the movement's first emergence in the Montgomery (Alabama) bus boycott that began in late 1955 until its ultimate triumph in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

That triumph is all the more striking for the multiple disabilities against which blacks struggled. Around the world, there are numerous examples of racial or national minorities that suffer political oppression but wield leverage in the form of economic power or cultural position. In contrast, American blacks suffered simultaneous political disfranchisement, economic impoverishment, and cultural deprivation. They held few levers of social influence. Their struggle depended entirely on awakening the conscience of white America to the contradiction between racial discrimination and the American ethos.

Through nonviolent protest they put to rest the illusion that the injuries they had suffered in silence were lightly felt, and answered the doubts in their own minds and those of their fellow citizens that they were of equal civic merit. Indeed, the civil-rights confrontations showed blacks to be a great deal more civilized than their oppressors. Their victory is testimony both to the quality of their struggle and to the underlying strength of American principles. It has put their country well along the path to becoming that rare if not unheard-of thing, a multiracial society of genuine civic equality.

This important and stirring piece of our national history has, however, been talked and written about far less than it deserves, either in popular culture or in historiography. Why? In part it may be because once the nation's conscience was belatedly aroused to the evil it had tolerated, race became the new litmus test of public morality; to acknowledge and record the triumph of the civil-rights movement might therefore suggest complacency, might mark one as insufficiently determined to root out whatever remnants of racism still survived. Then, too, the movement's triumph in some degree disappointed the millenarian images which its nonviolent warriors had invoked to spur the struggle on. The end of Jim Crow did not spell the end of racial prejudice or conflict or of differences in consciousness or perception between blacks and whites. Nor did equal access to jobs, schools, and public facilities result all at once in equal levels of wealth, education, and social pathologies, as (for no earthly reason) some expected it would.

In addition, the movement itself ended badly. Following the lead of the young shock troops of SNCC (the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, pronounced "Snick") who had stoically endured abuse apparently beyond their limit, the movement jettisoned its slogan of "Freedom Now" in favor of "Black Power," and turned away from nonviolence. Indeed, the movement's very victories seemed to crack the dams of fear that had held back generations of black anger; that anger now flowed forth in spasms of urban rioting, in the emergence of crazy, violent revolutionary cells, and in the rise of anti-Americanism, anti-Semitism, and anti-white racism as acceptable currents of black thought.

It was not just the civil-rights movement that lost its way. America as a whole seemed to go off its hinges in the 1960's. The momentous significance of a decade of civil-rights struggle thus faded into a larger, vaguer collage of turmoil and protest: the Vietnam escalation and the rise of the antiwar movement, the New Left and the counterculture.

Now, Taylor Branch has recaptured the historical moment in his compendious new book, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years 1954-63*. Despite the subtitle, the book is not a general history at all, but an account just of the civil-rights movement, using Martin Luther King, Jr. as its organizing focus. Branch is at work on a second volume that will complete the story, but this first one covers

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the bulk of the civil-rights era, and does so in painstaking detail.

Thanks to Branch, we can revisit each scene in the drama, from the Montgomery bus boycott to the lunch-counter sit-ins in Greensboro and Nashville, from the near-murderous assault on Freedom Riders in Anniston to the riots that sought to block the admission of James Meredith to the University of Mississippi, from the March on Washington to the racists' vindictive response in the Birmingham church-bombing that killed four little girls. Branch has carefully reconstructed each civil-rights demonstration, from conception to execution, often with interesting descriptions of key participants.

The Montgomery bus boycott, he shows, had a long germination. It was because Rosa Parks showed the seriousness of purpose and had the requisite presentability to symbolize their cause that black leaders took up and publicized her arrest; they had passed over earlier, similar arrests of black women who lacked the necessary qualities. By contrast, the lunch-counter sit-ins, probably the quintessence of the civil-rights struggle, came about virtually by accident, a consequence of a spontaneous impulse by four freshmen at North Carolina A&T. Indeed, by Taylor's account the movement could not have succeeded without the participation not only of college students but of hundreds of high-school and even grammar-school students, whose prime qualification may have been that they were too innocent to appreciate the ghastly dangers they were courting.

Branch's book also serves as a reminder of the enormous social distance America has traveled since the early civil-rights days. So obvious do the rights and wrongs of the issue seem today that it is easy to forget how ingrained and intractable racism appeared back then, so much a part of the way things were that its institutional defeat seemed virtually beyond hope. The Montgomery bus boycotters at first did not dare to aim for integrated seating; they merely demanded that discriminatory practices be buffered with a few meager courtesies. It was only the refusal of city authorities to brook any compromise that spurred the protesters to their ultimate victory. It is startling, too, to be reminded that the television networks, today so self-consciously forward-thinking, refused to broadcast a speech to the 1960 Republican National Convention by President Eisenhower's sole high-ranking black aide lest his appearance on the screen give offense to Southern audiences.

THE book should help to correct distortions in popular memory about the relation of the Kennedys to the civil-rights struggle. Far from being partners in the struggle, President John and Attorney General Robert Kennedy were dragged along under political duress. They were much interested in securing black votes, little in securing black rights. They repeatedly invoked constitutional constraints barring federal assistance or protection for civil-rights workers, then resisted proposals for legal changes that would have expanded the authority of the federal government. The civ-


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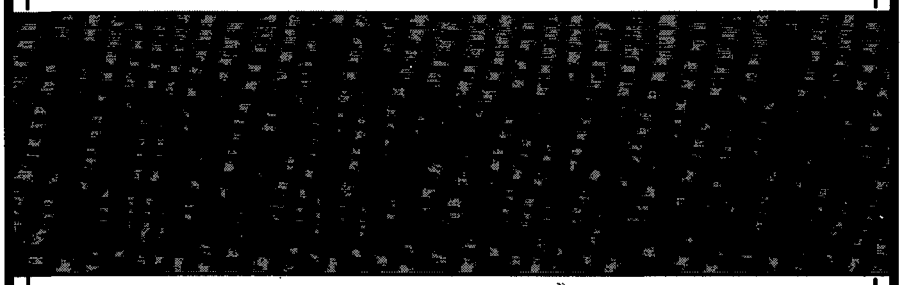
Paul Johnson



Author of A HISTORY OF THE JEWS and MODERN TIMES: The World from the Twenties to the Eighties.

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il-rights issue seems to have engaged them much less than it did New York's Republican Governor, Nelson Rockefeller, or Kennedy's Vice President and successor, Lyndon Johnson.

But Branch does not prettify the heroes of his story, either. Civil-rights leaders are shown with all their behind-the-scenes blemishes—vanity, rivalry, greed, lust, power-hunger. Those who quarreled with King, notably the NAACP's Roy Wilkins, come off in an especially bad light. Even King himself is not spared. Although Branch makes only the most fleeting and apologetic reference to King's notorious womanizing, he does show him to be an often indecisive leader, with little sense of strategy, and sometimes overmastered by fear.

The very honesty of this portrait works, however, to capture King's greatness. As the Reagan presidency has most recently shown, a great leader can lack many desirable qualities so long as he does certain things exceptionally well. In the case of the civil-rights struggle, success depended on bringing America face-to-face with the contradiction between its deepest ideals and the reality of race discrimination. And forcing this confrontation required that black Americans find the courage and self-confidence to resist the status quo. King's rhetorical virtuosity, which could in a single speech touch illiterate black sharecroppers and white elites alike, was an irreplaceable element in these processes.

THOUGH Branch's book has many virtues, and though it fills a gaping need, it suffers from two shortcomings. The first is its prose, which is at best pedestrian and, when it reaches for rhetorical resonance, often worse. Strange similes and overwrought adjectives clutter the pages, not to mention verbs tortured for effect into unusual meanings. Here is an example of Branch's style:

> King and Kennedy were at odds over the innermost meanings of freedom. Having wrestled to a secret, preliminary draw in the Rose Garden, they acted out their differences in gargantuan public spectacles of haunting, providential aptness, like a thunderclap after confession.

The subject of this passage is Kennedy's warning to King to rid his entourage of two Communists. And that brings us to the source of the book's more serious flaw. A main subtext in Branch's narrative is the story of FBI surveillance of two close King associates, Stanley Levison and Jack O'Dell, and the efforts of the Kennedy administration to persuade King to separate himself from these two men. As Branch tells it, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover pursued Levison and O'Dell merely as a way of getting at King, whom Hoover despised (according to Branch) out of a combination of racism and anger over criticisms of the Bureau which King had reportedly uttered.

In the case of Stanley Levison, Branch stops just short of proclaiming a definitive judgment on the allegations that he was a Communist. (The FBI, for reasons Branch finds scurrilous, has refused his Freedom of Information Act request for all its documents about Levison.) Nonetheless, Branch does conclude that "Levison's character and historical contributions are established beyond significant doubt." He says, indeed, that "King and Levison both in fact were the rarest heroes of freedom," that their persecution by the FBI was "less open to correction than the Salem witch trials," and that it constituted "an American echo of the Alfred Dreyfus scandal."

This is how Branch presents the facts about Levison:

> As a longtime official of the American Jewish Congress, . . . Levison had specialized in fundraising for [it] and for a host of civil libertarian and radical causes—to save the Rosenbergs, to abolish as unconstitutional the McCarran Act and other restrictions on political expression from the McCarthy era, to assist the defendants in the Smith Act "show trials." Since 1949, nearly a hundred top officials of the U.S. Communist party had been jailed and deported under the Smith Act. Working closely and often clandestinely with defense committees, Levison had served in effect as a financial pillar of the Communist party during the height of its persecution.
>
> Levison was a fiercely independent thinker, of eclectic political interests. After Joseph McCarthy's power was broken by Senate censure in 1954 and the Justice Department reduced Smith Act prosecutions, he joined with A. Philip Randolph and others to support the beleaguered Southern Negroes trying to integrate public schools under the *Brown* decision. . . . Communists officially scorned such efforts. In the prevailing Marxist jargon . . . integration was a "revisionist" pursuit . . . [that] contradicted the official Moscow goal of "separate national development" for American Negroes. . . .

This treatment of a question so central to Branch's book is deficient in knowledge, understanding, and honesty. In claiming that Levison's work for school integration shows he was no Communist but a "fiercely independent thinker," Branch assumes, incorrectly, that Levison would have been restricted by the party to working with only those blacks who already toed its line. And even if this were true, Branch has his facts wrong: the *Brown* decision inspired a quick change in the party line. A party book published in 1954 gave this appraisal of *Brown*: "This victory, as Comrade [William Z.] Foster stated, 'belongs in the first place to the Negro people themselves,' whose united persistent mass opposition to segregation has wrested this significant gain."* And in 1956, party chief Eugene Dennis explained in his published report to the National Committee: "In the 1954 Program the previous position of the party on self-determination in the Black Belt has been modified, in fact dropped."

Far less excusable than Branch's ignorance is his apparently deliberate effort to shade the facts to fit his conclusions. Branch makes it

* Betty Gannett, *The Communist Program and the Fight for Jobs, Peace, Equal Rights and Democracy* (New Century Publishers, 1954), p. 25.

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sound as if Levison's financial relations with the party had to do only with defending the persecuted; in this assessment he claims to be drawing on the research of David Garrow, whose book, *The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr.*, was hailed as a scathing exposé of the bureau. Yet here is what Garrow reports:

> According to some former FBI agents, Jack Childs [the Bureau's prize informant in the top echelons of the Communist Party, USA] told the Bureau that Levison reportedly had been an important secret financial benefactor of the Communist party since perhaps 1945 or 1946. Levison was reputed to have played a central role in establishing businesses whose real purpose was to earn or perhaps launder money needed by the Communist party. . . .
>
> Beginning in 1953 or early 1954, however, Jack Childs also told the FBI that Levison was assisting Communist party financial chiefs . . . in acquiring and managing the CP's secret monies. . . . Then, in February 1954, party treasurer Weiner died, and Levison's reported role in CP financial affairs became even more important. Stanley, Jack Childs told the Bureau, was now the interim chief administrator of the party's most secret funds, and Childs's nominal boss. . . .
>
> . . . Jack Childs could supply firsthand testimony that Levison had been directly involved in secret Communist activity in 1954, activity that almost certainly made Levison privy to the party's financial link to the Soviet Union. . . .

Garrow himself concludes that by the later 1950's Levison had sincerely separated himself from the party and worked with King out of pure conviction. This is a reasonable conclusion, although different from that of the FBI, which believed that Levison had courted King as a party agent. In any event, the reader of Garrow's book can draw his own conclusion about which interpretation to accept; not so, the reader of Taylor Branch's. Because this information does not fit his argument that the FBI was wickedly motivated, Branch simply suppresses it and substitutes the anodyne version I have quoted above, with the American Jewish Congress tossed in as a non-red herring.

BRANCH's treatment of Jack O'Dell is of a piece with this. O'Dell was called to testify about his Communist activities before both the Senate and House subcommittees investigating subversion, and he pleaded the Fifth Amendment before both. Evidence presented to those subcommittees identified him as a member of the National Committee of the Communist party who served as a party organizer. To this day he is an important fixture in the pro-Communist Left, although he appears to be associated not with the party itself but rather with a small pro-Soviet splinter group named Line of March.

Here, however, is how Branch presents O'Dell:

> [After World War II] he went back to New Orleans and found work as an organizer for his union, the National Maritime Union [NMU]. It was renowned among Negroes as the first seamen's international to break the color line. . . . One of its international executives was the first Negro to hold such a position in any trade union. . . . When an anti-Communist faction purged the union in 1950, O'Dell was expelled for circulating peace petitions.

Once again, Branch has his facts wrong. On a quick check I found three unions (the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, and the International Longshoremen's Association) that had black national officers before the NMU did, and there may well have been more. And once again Branch diligently prettifies the picture. The NMU was dominated by Communists until its own Communist-installed president, Paul Curran, broke with the party and turned against it. He then purged the remaining Communists from the staff, and there is no reason to doubt that he knew exactly who they were. If "peace petitions" were in fact an issue in the purge, in all likelihood they


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were petitions against American resistance to North Korea's invasion of South Korea.

Whenever O'Dell may have separated himself from the party, it was at least a few years later than Levison did. Moreover, the fact that Levison was the one who brought O'Dell into a key role in the administrative structure of King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference raises doubts about whether Levison's own break was genuine. So does the fact, related by Branch with characteristic fudging, that a year and a half after Levison's withdrawal from his role in party finance (and months after his relationship with King had commenced), he was brought into a council of the top leaders of the party's various factions in order to help work out a compromise that might avert a split.

WHATEVER the whole truth about Levison, the fact is that various Communists made valuable contributions to the civil-rights struggle, as did socialists and radicals of miscellaneous stripe. They all deserve thanks for what they did, but we also need to recognize that the Communists' contribution was especially flawed by ulterior motives. When the movement began to go haywire in the mid- to late 60's, the Communists hastened to encourage its most irresponsible elements, eventually becoming big promoters of the Black Panther party. Apparently, the Communist party found that this development served its interest, perhaps because it isolated black militants from many other white supporters. Whatever benefit the party might have derived from this strategy, it surely was a disaster for black America.

A complete history of the civil-rights movement would have to include a balanced presentation of the issue of Communist involvement, if only because Hoover's ham-fisted actions have made it a hot topic. Unfortunately, Taylor Branch's highly valuable study is flawed by his refusal to do so. He seems locked into a world view in which Communists are little more than liberals in a hurry, and anti-Communists are by definition paranoid.

## Burial Tour?

MEMBERS OF THE TRIBE: ON THE ROAD IN JEWISH AMERICA. By ZE'EV CHAFETS. *Bantam Books. 253 pp. $18.95.*

*Reviewed by*
EDWARD ALEXANDER

IN DECEMBER of last year my wife and I drove into Natchez, Mississippi. Seeing the dome of a large building that dominated the skyline, we headed toward what we assumed was the town hall or one of the antebellum houses for which Natchez is justly famous. It turned out to be Temple B'nai Israel, the local synagogue.

Having spent several months in the South, we were not surprised by such a prominent public display of the Jewish presence. Throughout November the main thoroughfare of Memphis had been adorned by hundreds of handsome blue-and-white banners announcing an exhibition called "Danzig 1939: Treasures of a Destroyed Jewish Community." When the banners came down from the utility poles they were replaced by alternating Christmas trees and Hanukkah menorahs. At the very same time, Arkansas's state capitol in Little Rock was offering visitors an exhibition on "The Jewish Presence in Arkansas."

But when we tried to enter Natchez's synagogue, we found it (on a Saturday afternoon) locked. It was only when we arrived at our motel and began to read Ze'ev Chafets's account of his travels through Jewish America that we learned what was—and was not—to be found behind the grand exterior of Temple B'nai Israel:

> The temple's sanctuary has a powerful tracker organ, stained-glass windows, and a marble ark that holds five Torah scrolls. Polished oak pews seat three hundred downstairs, and there is a special section upstairs which was once reserved for noisy children and their black mammies. There are no more mammies in Natchez, however, and only four Jewish children. . . . What's left of the congregation [is] thirty-four people in all, twenty-four of them over the age of fifty.

This poignant description appears in Chafets's opening chapter, which recounts the dignified and heroic efforts of a Jew from Louisiana to provide "a decent funeral" for the many once-flourishing Jewish communities in the South that are now dying. Chafets accompanies him on his "macabre burial tour," the aim of which is to create a memorial museum to Southern Jewry and to use any surplus funds that are raised for the care of Jewish cemeteries.

Although *Members of the Tribe* tries hard to convey a sense of the endless varieties and unpredictable possibilities of Jewish life in America, the mortuary tone of its opening chapter pervades much of the book, replete as it is with impressions of assimilation, decline, evanescence. In Sioux City, Iowa, an AIPAC activist groans over his "dying community . . . a total disaster." At the Concord Hotel at Lake Kiamesha in the Catskills, where Jewish "singles" look for spouses, Chafets finds himself in the midst of 1,800 non-Jewish Jews: "There had been no Jewish songs, no Israeli dancing, not a single Jewish conversation that I hadn't initiated." A young woman from Colombia, hoping to preserve and enhance her Judaism by studying at Brandeis, allegedly a Jewish university, "'found kids who were just Americans . . . there was nothing Jewish about them.'" In his visit to Century Village, a retirement community in Florida, Chafets finds himself amid the "first generation of *American* Old Jews," who turn out to be "selfish, individualistic, pleasure-oriented." One resident, who has taken upon himself the quixotic task of organizing a *minyan* (mainly for the purpose of praying for the dead), complains to Chafets: "'It's just assimilation . . . nobody's Jewish anymore. Believe me, sometimes I cry at night just to think of it.'"

EDWARD ALEXANDER *is professor of English at Tel Aviv University and the University of Washington. His most recent book is* The Jewish Idea and Its Enemies.

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Ze'ev Chafets is an American-born Jew who, at age twenty, took the high road to Jerusalem. In the succeeding twenty-two years he has made a reputation for himself as one of the shrewdest, most effective directors the Israel Government Press Office ever had, and as the author of one book about Israeli society and another about the double standard employed by the media reporting from the Middle East. Chafets went to Israel in order to make sense of the incoherent shards of Judaism that had puzzled and intrigued him in his youth. His parents wished him to think of himself as an American of the Jewish persuasion; but when he attended the Passover seder at his grandparents' home he had the sense of an entire way of life—a different land, a different language, different holidays, different aspirations—pursued secretly in the midst of people, Gentiles, who knew nothing whatever about it. These tantalizing hints of another time and another place to which he might belong led Chafets to Israel, where he "found what my ancestors had once had but failed to pass along—the attitudes and skills, spirit and substance of a distinctive, self-contained Jewish civilization." Then, perversely, Chafets became curious about the American Judaism he had abandoned, and this curiosity led to his travels through Jewish America.

THE story of these travels, lasting six months and covering thirty states, subtly confirms the rightness of Chafets's long-ago decision. Ostensibly, Chafets is committed to the doctrine that nothing Jewish is alien to him, and that even the most assimilated, or alienated, or ignorant American Jews may often turn out to be "Jewish in their hearts." His strict tolerance fails him only on rare occasions. He is not enamored of the leftist Jewish millionaire whose New Israel Fund is an instrument for transforming Israel into a country "that would meet the approval of the ACLU, the *Nation* magazine, and the Sierra Club"; he does not warm to the idea of a "lesbian hot tub Havdalah service" in the gay synagogue he visits in San Francisco; and he gives a mordant account of the "Crazy Eddie of American Judaism," a Miami rabbi offering conversions to Judaism in one day and guaranteeing "'to marry anybody to anybody, anytime and anyplace.'"

The notion that a "Jewish heart" continues to beat even in the breasts of Jews whose minds and lives have become entirely Americanized is invoked from time to time by Chafets as a unifying device, and by his interlocutors as a desperate excuse for their derelictions. One man describes all the Jewish families in his town who have converted to Roman Catholicism as "still Jewish in their hearts." Another assures Chafets that "'I'm a Jew in my heart, not in my head.'" In fact, however, the only thing that is likely to convince the reader of this book that such a collective anatomical endowment exists in and sustains the American Jews is negative evidence: the startling absence of anything resembling mind in this allegedly brainy people. Almost the only Jew in the book who appears to have been blessed with both a mind and a heart is the Bostoner Rebbe, Levi Yitzhak Horowitz, encapsulated in one of Chafets's finest portraits.

Despite this ritual sprinkling of the spice of Jewish "heart" over his large, variegated cast of characters, Chafets writes as a Zionist who believes that it is Israel and not an amorphous "tribalism" (as in the offensive title) that sustains American Jewry. Everywhere he went—which did not include the offices of Jewish journalists or academics—he met people who "identified with Israel in a deeply personal way," encountered Jewish communities united only by support for Israel, and heard that "'Israel raises money for local projects, not the other way around.'" Even in the gay synagogue, carrying more than the ordinary complement of leftists, the majority are "mainstream Zionists of the AIPAC variety." The Jews in Graterford prison in Pennsylvania (one of the most religiously observant groups Chafets met) raise money to support an orphan in Netanya, and are close observers of events in Israel. There is a touch of understandable Zionist triumphalism in Chafets's voice when he

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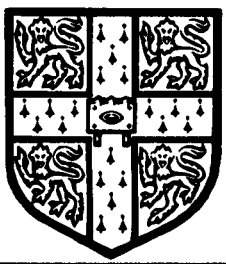


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observes that "increasingly, American Jews . . . need to import Israelis to help them carry out Jewish activities."

But if Chafets embraces the notion that when a man can no longer be a Jew, he becomes a Zionist, he cannot hide his resentment of the meretricious qualities in American Zionism. He finds something fraudulent in the "We Are One" slogan of "wealthy, secure young Americans who want to share in the drama and romance of the contemporary Jewish struggle without paying a price higher than a tax-exempt donation." And he takes note of another worrisome element in the Zionism of American Jews, but does not fully acknowledge its implications. He suggests that the preoccupation with Israel (like the preoccupation with the Holocaust) derives from a sense of guilt over the failure of the American Jewish community to act to save European Jewry during World War II. But he does not go on to say that if American Jews should once again find that the security of their brethren in far-off lands is not a compelling interest of their own government or fellow-citizens, they may behave as timidly as they did in the past. Will they adhere to their Zionism if the price does become higher than a tax-exempt donation? If not, what then will sustain American Jewish life?

CHAFETS makes no claim to comprehensiveness or inclusiveness. A reader may complain, with some justice, that he goes out of his way to avoid "representative" figures in favor of exotics and eccentrics, and ignores the very places—large-city synagogues, rabbinical seminaries and yeshivas, university programs in Jewish Studies—where Jewish life would seem to be thriving. But his impressions are nevertheless convincing, and have the ineffable power of bouncing us into the truth—far more so than all the articles and books written by doctrinally cheerful American Jewish demographer-sociologists laboriously explaining how the signs of decay, assimilation, and decline that Chafets sees are really, if one defines them artfully enough, portents of a great revival.

Some years ago I heard a venerable historian deliver a series of lectures on American Jewish history. The first two, dealing with colonial Jewry and the ascendancy of Central European Jewry in America, were sober, analytic, dispassionate; and they were warmly received by an audience of respectable size. The third and last, on contemporary American Jewry, was delivered to an adoring audience of over 500 people who responded passionately to the speaker's invocation of the usual statistics about the large number of Jewish Congressmen, professors, millionaires, and Nobel Prize winners as incontrovertible evidence of a new golden age. Afterward, at dinner, I asked the speaker where he was heading next. To California, he replied, to visit his many nephews and nieces; a pleasant prospect in one sense, but still more painful than pleasant, he added, because not a single one of them had married a Jew or maintained any link with Jewish life.

This combination of public optimism with private despair, rather like the grandly impressive but nearly empty Natchez synagogue and other public displays of the Jewish presence in America, may serve to confirm the truth of a famous remark by a character in one of Chaim Grade's stories about the transformation of Diaspora Jewry. The old slogan of Jewish assimilationists, he says, was to be a Jew at home and a man in public; now it's to be a Jew in public, and only a man at home.

## Ruin

LA CAPITAL: THE BIOGRAPHY OF MEXICO CITY. By JONATHAN KANDELL. *Random House. 640 pp. $24.95.*

*Reviewed by* DAVID FRUM

ONLY toward the very end of this huge work does Jonathan Kandell, who covered Latin America for the New York *Times* and is now assistant foreign editor of the *Wall Street Journal*, begin to convey some sense of the ecological and economic catastrophe that is modern Mexico City. Twenty million people are crammed into a great crater, 7,500 feet above sea level. The air is so filthy that, Kandell claims, breathing it is as dangerous as smoking two packs of cigarettes a day. The city grows by some 750,000 people a year, vastly more than can be employed, housed, serviced, or policed. Most of the population lives in squalid shantytowns, without paved roads, water or sewage, electricity, transportation, or security. Traffic is immobile.

Mexico City long ago depleted its own aquifers, and so water—for those lucky enough to have access to it—must be pumped at exorbitant cost from hundreds of miles away. Since there is no natural drainage from the crater, hundreds of millions of gallons of sewage must, at equally exorbitant cost, be pumped hundreds of miles back again. What is not pumped collects in the low areas of the crater to kill the poor and their children. The drying up of the lakes over which the city was built has aggravated its geological instability, and this, together with shoddy construction standards, leaves it vulnerable to earthquakes like that which destroyed the homes of 70,000 people in 1985.

Compared to the frightful facts of poverty, infant mortality, unemployment, industrial pollution, and environmental disaster, aesthetic regrets do not matter much. All the same, Mexico City was once one of the most beautiful places in the Americas. Just thirty years ago, you could still see the volcanoes and mountains that fringed the Valley of Mexico through the famously azure sky. The colonial core of what had been the richest city in Spanish America was, amazingly, intact, surrounded by the parks and avenues of the late 19th century and the art-deco neighborhoods of the early 20th. Beyond them were suburban villages, cobblestoned and quiet, and a little farther yet, some of the most fertile farmland in the whole country. The regime's longstanding attempt

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to legitimize itself by patronizing artists and intellectuals, as well as its hospitality to leftist political exiles, had thrust the city into cultural leadership within the Hispanic world, while the accumulating wealth from the early stages of Mexican industrialization was, for the first time, easing the lives of the poor.

What went wrong? Kandell does not have much of a reply. In fact, despite its title, *La Capital* is not particularly concerned with Mexico City. Its first 527 pages treat us to an intelligent and entertaining overview of Mexican history. Only in the final chapter—when Kandell ties the book up with an inexplicably upbeat conclusion—does he attempt to explain what has happened to the city in which he grew up.

To be fair, the final chapter does itemize with brutal vividness many of the elements of an answer: the subsidies and favoritism that have lured industry into a region whose geology and climate are disastrously unsuitable for it; the mechanization of agriculture that has driven a burgeoning population off the land and into the cities to look for work; the division of authority between the appointed mayor of the federal district and the "elected" governor of the surrounding province of Mexico; and a centralized culture that makes life in the provinces unthinkable to anyone with any choice about his location.

But individual insights are not the same as an answer. Mexico needs a Tocqueville, a Tocqueville of failure. Kandell is a reporter, and confronted with a disaster this big, a reporter's instincts can mislead him; the better the reporter, the farther astray they can take him. Sometimes there is no balance to be struck; no human touch to find; no ray of hope amid the despair.

KANDELL calls his book a biography rather than a history, but his approach is not at all biographical. The biographer of a man who ended as horribly as Mexico City seems on its way to doing would try to understand what in his subject's character and circumstances brought him to his dismal conclusion, and that means starting at the beginning. To Kandell, Mexico City's troubles emerge—quite suddenly and mysteriously—in 1968. It takes a harder look to trace them a little farther back than that.

Mexico has consistently demonstrated itself incapable of honest and effective self-government. From 1821 until 1876, the country's history was a bloody and random sequence of wars, plots, coups, and corruption. When Porfirio Diaz grabbed power in 1876, he stabilized the nation for thirty-five years, but at the price of centering the entire state in himself and controlling his subordinates by permitting them to steal. By 1911, Diaz's peace had become intolerable, and Mexico exploded into a meaningless and pointless revolution that, over a decade, killed perhaps a million, perhaps two million, people before installing a new elite—just as authoritarian, distinctly more brutal, and breathtakingly more corrupt—in the place of Diaz's henchmen. Descendants of this elite have remained in power from then until today.

To a North American, Mexico looks like a fantastically statist society: Kandell figures that by 1982, some 70 percent of the nation's economy was state-controlled (up from some 13 percent in 1968) and 1.5 million Mexico City bureaucrats supervised 1,155 state-owned enterprises, which, in turn, employed millions more. The media, both state and private, say what the government of the day wants them to say, and the state-supported intellectuals find it prudent to use their wit in denunciations of the United States.

Yet this huge and expensive government cannot even begin to control illegal parking in Mexico City. It cannot control the growth of the capital because those in charge of enforcing the government's innumerable laws and edicts to slow development routinely take bribes from those who want to evade them. Since success in business, on any scale above that of a tortilla

*Man Praying*, detail from the Prague Haggadah, 1556. (Valmadonna Trust Library, London)

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vendor, requires the suborning of the bureaucracy, enterprises find that they must locate themselves near the agencies that grant them the right to import and export, that allocate credit, and that control the unions. Citizens' legal rights are routinely violated by local big shots because the juridical system lacks the power to enforce them. Regulations to protect the public health and safety mean nothing—or worse than nothing—when, as they so often do, they become opportunities for extortion by corrupt officials. It is the weakness of Mexico's government, perhaps even more than its gargantuan size, that has ruined Mexico City.

And Mexican government is so weak because no regime since, maybe, the Aztecs has been able to command the spontaneous respect and adhesion of its people. No wonder Mexicans break the law when their presidents do, too. Lopez Portillo, president from 1976 until 1982, personally stole in the vicinity of a billion dollars. His predecessor, Luis Echeverría, stole somewhat less during his six-year term, but that was before Mexico's great oil boom, and there was less to steal. No post-revolutionary Mexican president, not even the relatively clean Miguel de la Madrid, who succeeded Portillo and left office last year, has ever departed public life poorer than he entered it. And scandals like these are replicated throughout Mexican society. Kandell reports that superiors assess how much each Mexico City constable ought to be stealing, and then demand a tithe. Without corruption, petty officials would starve, business would be suffocated by red tape, the ruling party's elaborate patronage system would wither, and Mexican political stability—such as it is—would collapse.

Historians may quarrel over the source of Mexico's woes: perhaps they are the lingering effects of the barbarism of the Aztecs, or the superimposition of Castilian culture on an Indian society, or the collapse of the economy after independence, or the mistakes of Porfirio Diaz, or the failure of the Revolution. And Latin American experts may disagree about whether the disturbance is irreparable. Perhaps more democracy might improve things, or perhaps left-wing or right-wing authoritarianism would; maybe the Mexicans need more foreign investment; maybe they need more self-sufficiency. But maybe it is too late to do anything other than watch the biggest city in the world slowly poison itself.

## Rhyme and Reason

THE DIRECTION OF POETRY: AN ANTHOLOGY OF RHYMED AND METERED VERSE WRITTEN IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE SINCE 1975. Edited by ROBERT RICHMAN. *Houghton Mifflin. 168 pp. $19.95.*

*Reviewed by* ROBERT ALTER

For much of our century, it has seemed that free verse, which became firmly established in English during the heyday of modernism, was for the foreseeable future to be the inevitable form of poetry, and that metrically regular and rhymed verse would be relegated to the occasional technical exercise or atavistic impulse. As far back as the 1920's, the new formal looseness of poetry and the adoption of many poetic functions by modernist prose led Edmund Wilson to ask in a famous essay whether verse was a dying technique. Against this background, *The Direction of Poetry* is a startling revelation.

The title Robert Richman has chosen is, of course, a provocation, and I am unqualified to assess how sound it is likely to prove as a prediction of the future. The anthology, however, clearly reflects an extraordinarily wide and careful reading of contemporary English verse, and whether or not rhyme and meter are the current direction of poetry, they have been taken up by a surprising variety of poets, young and old. The volume presents the work of 76 poets, in impartial alphabetical order, one to three poems per poet. Among those included are eminent figures like Stanley Burnshaw, Elizabeth Bishop, Seamus Heaney, Anthony Hecht, John Hollander, Stanley Kunitz, Howard Nemerov, Derek Walcott, and Robert Penn Warren, together with many younger or lesser known poets; the majority are American, but England, Ireland, Wales, New Zealand, and the West Indies are all represented.

What is noteworthy, tending to support the manifesto of the title, is that there is little here that sounds anachronistic. To be sure, a few of the lesser pieces have a tired Edwardian look, and occasionally the use of rhyme encourages a certain patness or contrivance. Most, however, are fresh and lively, speaking from the quick of contemporary experience, and remarkably various in their exploitation of rhyme and meter. They persuasively bear out the pronouncement with which Robert Richman, who is the poetry editor of the *New Criterion*, begins his introduction. There he writes that the poems he has chosen give new force to a nearly abandoned idea—namely, that the reading of poetry is a source of pleasure. The palpable presence of pleasure and the return to conventions of regular versification are, I think, intimately associated.

Expressively used phonetic regularity, or what in a more innocent age could still be called the music of poetry, is not some time-bound feature to be outgrown, but rather an essential dimension of the poetic experience. In English, for the past several centuries, this regularity has been associated with a recurring sequence of stressed and unstressed syllables and, more optionally, with rhyme. It hardly needs to be said that free verse, while offering a new flexibility of expression, has its own musicality, employing shifting rhythmic patterns, sound-clusters, and even an occasional ad-hoc rhyme. But free verse also renounces the many delights of serendipitous discovery encouraged by the more visible formal patterns that have been indigenous to English verse.

Here, for example, are a few lines from a stanzaic poem called "An-

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gel" by Brad Leithauser (born 1953), which is a kind of painterly-metaphysical meditation on a dragonfly skimming over the surface of a river:

see him, like a sparkler,
tossing lights upon the water,
surplus greens, reds, milky
blues, and violets blended
with ebony. Suspended

like a conductor's baton,
he hovers. . . .

The poem uses an AABCC rhyme-scheme, with frequent off-rhymes, and a trochaic tetrameter, with abundant substitutions and variations. The first line here, one metrical foot short, sets up the release into tetrameter regularity of "tossing lights upon the water," which thus has a certain ring of revelation. The enjambed "blended/with ebony" joins in the rhymed surprise of "Suspended," which then, in nice mimetic fidelity, hovers dragonfly-like over an inter-stanzaic enjambment, the only one in the poem. The choreography of sound needs the grids of rhyme and meter to realize the deftness of its own moves. We delight not only in the imitative fecundity of sound, working through words on a non-verbal object, but in the subtle wit for which sound becomes a vehicle.

There are scores of analogous instances one could cite from *The Direction of Poetry*, from poems widely different in theme, form, and feeling. Let me quote just the first two stanzas from Katha Pollitt's "Of the Scythians":

who came whirling out of the North
like a locust swarm, storm-darkening the sky,
their long hair whipping in the wind like the manes of horses,
no one remembers anything now but I:

how they screamed to the slaughter, as the skirl of a thousand flutes
fashioned from enemies' thighbones shrilled them on.
Naked they rode. We stood by our huts, stunned mute:
gold flashed from each spear, gold glittered on each arm.

Here the rhythmic pattern is loose, usually five beats per line with changing sequences of unaccented syllables and the sound constellated in alliterative clusters—a vague reminiscence, perhaps, of the old Anglo-Saxon versification that is apt for the archaic-historic subject. Against the shifting rhythms of the lines, the rhymes, moving from the off-rhymes of the second stanza to a perfect ABAB at the end of the poem, form a strong counterpoint. Rhyme is one of poetry's most supple resources for strangely coupling disparate images and ideas. What does "I" have to do with the locust-darkened "sky," or "the skirl of a thousand flutes" with the villagers standing "stunned mute"? The phonetic intercourse between words, together with the phrases in which they are embedded, begets multiple currents of underground correspondence and antithesis. The haunting concert of musical effects, images, and bits of narrative in the poem alchemically transmutes a moment of history into several things at once—a daring glimpse into the terrible beauty of violence, a small homage by way of reminiscence to the epic tradition in literature, an unrestrained reveling in the incantatory power of words.

THE return to traditional versification understandably leads many of these poets to reflect on the nature and purpose of poetry, which is in any case a common theme for 20th-century poets. In fact, the self-reflexive poems included here offer some acute explanations for their own recourse to rhyme and meter, like this stanza from Dana Gioia's "The Next Poem": "The music that of common speech/but slanted so that each detail/sounds unexpected as a sharp/inserted in a simple scale." These sundry reflections on the craft and ends of poetry are by no means rhapsodic romantic celebrations. If there is celebration, it is tempered, as befits a poet today, by a varying sense of the ways in which poetry is itself a sham and delusion, or a mere conjuring with words, or a Sisyphean impossibility.

The most remarkable of these poems on poetry is Howard Nemerov's "The Makers," which may well be one of the best poems written in English over the past fifteen

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years. It is made up of three eight-line blank-verse stanzas, though the grand assertive beat of the iambic pentameter is not fully released until the seventh and eighth lines of the poem. The speaker begins with a question: "Who can remember back to the first poets,/The greatest ones, greater even than Orpheus?" Since "No one has remembered that far back," the speaker moves into a hymn of praise to the legacy left mankind by those nameless first makers of verse. The final stanza at once affirms and evokes through its own example how the meaningful music, the incantatory force, the sheer intoxication of naming (as ordinary speech cannot name) have made poetry one of the supreme vehicles of civilization.

But civilization, on the evidence of its oldest records and certainly on the evidence of our own time, has had much to answer for, and Nemerov's poem concludes with a climactic counter-turn: one consequence realized through the intrinsic potential of poetry has been the fashioning of new and perhaps private languages, separating man from man in the overweening boldness of the creative drive released by poets themselves:

> They were the first great listeners, attuned
> To interval, relationship, and scale,
> The first to say above, beneath, beyond,
> Conjurors with love, death, sleep, with bread and wine,
> Who having uttered, vanished from the world
> Leaving no memory but the marvelous
> Magical elements, the breathing shapes
> And stops of breath we build our Babels on.

Every anthology creates certain frustrations because no reader's sensibility will coincide completely with that of the anthologist, and *The Direction of Poetry* compounds this difficulty by offering such tantalizing brief samplings of each poet's work. But the book as a whole vividly reminds us of the rich and various pleasures of the poetic experience, from playful to poignant, and shows how "the breathing shapes/And stops of breath" of meter and rhyme have not lost their power to define the form of those pleasures.

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